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THE
COURSE OF NATURE
URGED,
ON PRINCIPLES OF ANALOGY,
IN VINDICATION OF
PARTICULAR TEXTS OF SCRIPTURE
FROM
SCEPTICAL OBJECTIONS.
IN SIXTY SECTIONS.

BY THE REV. F. E. J. VALPY, M.A.
MASTER OF READING SCHOOL.

"You have so little ground of argument, that you think you must need argue even in opposition to the nature of things, to the custom of men, and to the opinions of every body."

Cicero pro Rosc. Amer., cap. 15.

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TO THE RIGHT REV.
CHARLES JAMES BLOMFIELD, D.D.

LORD BISHOP OF LONDON,

WHOSE INDEFATIGABLE EXERTIONS IN THE MAINTENANCE

OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

ARE KNOWN AND APPRECIATED IN ALL THE CHURCHES,

THIS HUMBLE ATTEMPT

AT

REMOVING SOME OF THE DIFFICULTIES IN THE RECEPTION OF

THE SAME MOST HOLY FAITH IS

Dedicated,

WITH SENTIMENTS OF SINCERE RESPECT,

BY THE AUTHOR.

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Page 9, line 16, omit " for the same reasons."

— 16, — 2, add deserted before web.

— 16, — 11, read " with many things which are
found in the economy of the world."

P R E F A C E.

THE mode of reasoning adopted in the following pages is founded on the celebrated work of Bishop Butler, entitled "The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature." It is almost impossible to estimate too highly that splendid production of piety and genius. Indeed it may be truly said, that had the Church of England defended the outworks of the Christian Faith by no other human means than the labours of Butler and of Paley, she would have amply deserved the lasting thanks of all the Christian world.

The work, however, to which reference has been now made, is rendered unfit for general

readers by the abstruseness of its reasoning and the conciseness of its style. Nor does it sufficiently enter into detail. It takes large and comprehensive views of objections, but does not much condescend to particulars. It is, in fact, rather a mine of gold than the gold itself separated from the ore, and brought into common use.

It appeared therefore to the writer of the present volume, that he might do some benefit to the Christian world, if he should publish a work more popular in its language, and more particular and specific in its detail : if he should touch directly on passages of Scripture, which have fallen under the censures of sceptical reasoners ; and if he should do so in the order in which such passages occur in Scripture.

There seemed to him also no need to distract the reader's attention by attempting an answer to the objections which are usually adduced against Natural Religion. He has therefore simplified his task by confining his remarks to objections made to Revealed Religion. And his object has been to transfer every difficulty

from the Book of Scripture to the Book of Nature : to demonstrate that what is the subject of censure and cavil in sacred writ, must in justice equally be alleged against the Author of the universe ; and must, if rightly advanced, establish a system of universal atheism.

The system of Nature, as Paley has observed, is not a system of *optimism*. It unquestionably contains numerous difficulties which it has ever been impossible wholly to explain. What wonder, then, if Revelation, which professes to derive its origin from the same Founder, should contain difficulties as much beyond our power to unravel as those of Nature ? And can it be a proof of wisdom to acknowledge the existence of the Divine Being and the truth of a future state, and yet to refuse our credence to Scripture, on the ground of certain objections, which are equally applicable to natural religion ?

Nothing ought to satisfy the true moralist, or the true philosopher, more than this mode of treating objections to Revelation. Sceptics may imagine, that, when they are combating Scripture, they are combating fiction, and what has no foundation or reality ; but they must admit

that in Nature all is real, all is actually going on ; and that they cannot make things otherwise than they are, by any art or device. If, therefore, Nature has and will continue to have its course, although it abounds with difficulties, what pretence can any, who have the slightest claim to reason or common sense, have for thinking that Revelation also will not have its course, because it contains difficulties which are, however, precisely the same as those which exist in the system of Nature ?

With all its difficulties, natural religion is deemed so true, that almost all the world regard its impugnors as madmen. I do not see how the impugnors of the truth of Scripture can expect any better treatment, if, while they must confess the weight of external and internal evidence which the Scripture possesses, they reject its authority on the ground of difficulties which are the same with those of natural religion. If, in short, we accept natural religion, we are, as reasonable men, constrained to accept revealed religion, which in every way corresponds to it.

Nor is even the atheist excluded from the application of our reasoning. He complains

of various things in the course of Nature ; yet these things exist. He may complain similarly of various things in the pages of Scripture : yet they also may take place in spite of his remonstrances. Things are as they are, and things will be as they will be, however he may object to them. Let him beware lest, whether he acknowledge a God or not, the soul may live on, as it is living now ; and lest men may be judged hereafter, as they are judged now. Our courts of justice, our judges, our ceremonies of assizes, *may be* lively emblems of a future more grand and more awful judgment.

We appeal from things earthly and temporal to things heavenly and eternal. And it might naturally have been expected, that this appeal would be found frequently made by the writers of records professing to come from God. It would be imagined that they must have known the intimate relation between this world and that which is to come ; and that the Author of both worlds would have emphatically marked this relation. Accordingly we find this reference to be very frequent and decisive. But only a few instances can here be given : “ If

I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things ?”* “ The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof ; but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”† “ What man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone ? or, if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent ? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him ?”‡ “ When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child : but, when I became a man, I put away childish things.”§ “ If I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you by revelation or by knowledge ? And even things without life, giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a dis-

* John iii. 8.

† Ib. iii. 8.

‡ Matt. vii. 9.

§ 1 Cor. xiii. 10.

tion in the sound, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for the battle?"* "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be."† "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of his flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."‡ "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."§ And thus all our Lord's parables are founded on the resemblance between things human and things divine, and appeal from what was known and visible to what was unknown and invisible.

In the following pages, the writer has endeavoured to combat with objections drawn from

* 1 Cor. xiv. 6.

† Ib. xv. 35.

‡ Gal. vi. 7.

§ Prov. iv. 18.

the pages of Scripture. Objections, however, have been often raised on extraneous considerations. Yet even these are often appositely met by general analogies of Nature. "How can you account," says one objector, "for the variety of opinions in religion, and for the existence of so many different sects?" As if men were not constituted by nature so as to differ on all other subjects: as if all were universally and entirely agreed on everything else. "How is it," says another, "that the very ministers of religion differ so much from each other in their opinions of religion?" As if physicians, barristers, politicians, did not differ as much in their opinions on medical, legal, and political subjects. "How is it," says a third, "that the ministers of religion are frequently found not to practise what they teach?" As if medical men always adhere to the mode of living which they with perfect honesty recommend to others. Others complain of hypocrisy in the profession of private Christians; as if hypocrisy was not met with in persons who make no profession of religion. And others complain of

the persecutions and disturbances caused by Christianity; as if, where the malevolent passions exist, the world has not always found occasions to indulge them; as if the noxious element has ever wanted a conductor.* Thus we find, that even in these extraneous objections, the common course of nature will supply us with suitable parallels, and suppress or correct our tendencies to sceptical reveries.

In the course of the following work, frequent citations will appear from the writers of Greece and Rome.† Their opinions manifest the feelings of pagan man, and supply us with correct data by which to ascertain that law of Nature which is written, not by man, but by God, and not on tablets of wood and stone, but on “the fleshly tablets of the heart.” In this point of view, the ancient classics are a treasure of inestimable value.

It may be observed, in conclusion, that the

* See Paley, *Evid. Christ.* Part iii. ch. 7.

† These citations have usually been taken from known translators, whose names are given in order to remove suspicion of unfairness in the translations.

removal of objections to the authority of Scripture becomes of immense importance, when we reflect, that if there are no solid objections wherewith to confront the positive evidence for its truth, that positive evidence then shines out as the sun when it shines in its strength, when it has no clouds to obscure its orb, or to prevent the full display of its meridian brightness.

THE
COURSE OF NATURE,
&c.

SECTION I.

GENESIS i. 5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31. “ *And the evening and the morning were the first day—the second day—the third day—the fourth day—the fifth day—the sixth day.*”

It has been asked, why God should occupy six days in the Creation, since it must be supposed that He would effect the work instantaneously.

The usual answer which is given is, that God chose this method for the sake of establishing that widely extended and highly merciful institution, the Sabbath : and this answer gives an excellent reason for the adoption of this method, by God : but indeed the adoption of this method, abstractedly considered, considered as a principle, is in direct harmony with the works of God as exhibited before us in the

natural world. Take the life of man and of other animals from infancy to mature age. Take the growth of plants and trees from their incipient to their perfect state. Are these instantaneous operations? Have we not, in the latter case, first “the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear?”* Have we not, in the former, the most astonishing diversities in many animals between their first and their last appearances, and all of them the result of time? Thus “in the larva of the libellula, which lives constantly and has still long to live under water, are descried the wings of a fly, which two years afterwards is to mount into the air.”† And thus also, we should but little suppose on seeing a child two hours after its birth, that that child would ever come to understand the motions of the heavens, and the demonstrations of mathematical science?‡ The beginnings of all things, says Cicero,§ are small, but they avail themselves of their peculiar advancements, and receive augmentation. In short, where do we perceive in nature that precipitancy, which the objection supposes must necessarily mark the works of Omnipotence? Does not everything about us prove

* Mark iv. 28. † Paley, Nat. Theol., Conclusion.

‡ Id. *ibid.*

§ De Finibus, v. 21.

the unphilosophical nature of the objection, and establish a direct opposition to it in the world which lies before our eyes? The plants and the animals, the alternations of day and night, and of summer and winter, the arts and the sciences, all require time to develope their several properties. Indeed the objector has merely to compare himself with what he was, to be convinced that there is no foundation for his scruples.

We may carry on the spirit of this objection to the tardiness of the divine procedure in christianizing the world, and in the allowance of so many and such various impediments in the way of a complete *new-creation* of the world by the gospel of Christ. But it is sufficient merely to *hint* at the uniformity of the divine administration in this respect with its general agency in all others: for the subject has been so ably illustrated, in this very view of the case, by the profound Bishop Butler in the sixth chapter of the Second Part of his *Analogy of Religion*, and by Archdeacon Paley in the sixth chapter of the Third Part of his *Evidences of Christianity*, that it is needless to do more than refer the reader to those works for a masterly solution of this difficulty.

SECTION II.

GEN. iii. 14. “ *The Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.*”

What had this animal done, it is said, to deserve this punishment? It had been a most involuntary agent of Satan: whence this change in its condition?

But shall we find no analogies like this in the course of nature? We shall find one at once in a law of Moses, which is acted on in our own country, (Levit. xx. 15:) “ If a man lie with a beast, he shall surely be put to death, *and ye shall slay the beast.*” Now the question may be put here also: What has the animal done to deserve death? it is an involuntary agent. And yet the animal is punished with death, however unconscious of crime. It may be said that here are reasons and ne-

cessities for the death of this animal, but that there were none in the punishment of the serpent. This is no reply : it still is true that death is inflicted on the animal by what may truly be said to be the law of nature.

In Rome, a parricide was cast into a sack and thrown into the Tiber : but with him were thrown also a monkey, a cock, and a snake. Here there was not even the agency of these animals used by the parricide : and yet they are destroyed on account of, and with, the murderer.

What think we of the animals which have been offered in all ages of the world as an atonement of the sins of men ? How had these animals partaken of these sins, so as to deserve death ?

A drunkard sets a house on fire, and a chained-up dog is burnt to death. A villain burns a stable, and with it an unoffending horse. Men, incited by their evil passions, go to war ; and horses as well as men are wounded in the battle.

Hence the objection really turns on the point, (a point, to which a satisfactory reply can be given,) whether anything was to be gained by this curse on the serpent : for thus

frequently do animals suffer through the wickedness of men, either in conjunction with them, or otherwise.

In the account which is given by Sophocles, in his *Œdipus*, of the terrible plague which ravaged Athens as a punishment of the murder of Laius by *Œdipus*, we find that the common animals suffered equally with our own race. The reasons indeed, for this plague, as assigned by the dramatist, may by us be supposed to be visionary, but still they show the feelings and sentiments of Pagan man. And in this view I go on to observe, that in exact accordance with this account is the threatened destruction by Jehovah of the common animals, as well of man, in consequence of the sinfulness of men: "I will destroy both man and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air." (Gen. vi. 7.) And in the same accordance is the representation made by St. Paul of the actual state of creation generally through the fall of Adam: "The *whole* creation travaileth and groaneth in pain *together* until now." (Rom. viii. 22.)

SECTION III.

GEN. 3. 24. — “ *So the Lord God drove out the man from Eden.*”

Why, says the objector, should God have placed Adam at all in Eden, if he were afterwards to be driven from it? What was the use of his ever being there?

But is it anything new in nature, that men should be at one time possessed of privileges or advantages, of which they are afterwards deprived? Have the verdure and luxuriance of spring never been exchanged for the nakedness and sterility of winter? Has plenty never been succeeded by famine, peace by war, or science by ignorance? Were health, beauty, fortune, power, rank, never lost to those who once enjoyed them? Have kings never been hurled from their thrones, rich men never ejected from their estates, the strong and the beautiful never stripped of their strength and their complexion? Has disease never changed the fine form into a loathsome carcass? Has time never turned the bloom and vigour of youth into the sear and

yellow leaf, into the weakness and decrepitude of age? Has the modest and the healthy virgin never been transformed into the defiled and diseased prostitute? Has death never cut short the earthly existence of human beings, and extinguished every power and faculty they enjoyed? In fact, we are born to die; and decay and dissolution are written on everything. So that the ancient writers have well observed that all things are constituted so as to decline;* that human things are in their nature extremely liable to fall away;† that it is natural for everything among men to grow old.‡ And how touching the words of Addison:§ “How surprising is this change! from the possession of vigorous life and strength, to be reduced in a few hours to this fatal extremity! Those lips, which look so pale and livid, within these few days gave delight to all who heard their utterance!” All the world presents us with so many parallels to what is related of the loss of Eden to Adam, that we must charge the course of nature with incongruity, if we would have the censure rest on the passage before us.

* Thucyd. ii. 64. † Pausan. iv. 29.

‡ Theodect. ap. Stob. p. 139.

§ Spectator, No. 133.

SECTION IV.

GEN. vi. 6.—“ *It repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart.*”

EXOD. xx. 5.—“ *I am a jealous God.*”

PS. xciv. 1.—“ *O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth.*”

JER. xxxii. 37.—“ *I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath.*”

As writers in all ages of the world have freely indulged in attributing eyes and ears, hands and feet, to the Divine Being, in order to express with greater convenience the modes or media of His actions ; so, for the same reason, they have not scrupled to attribute to Him such passions of our nature, as are best accommodated to express the motives of His actions. If, therefore, Scripture has adopted the same figurative mode of speaking, if it has accommodated its terms to the perceptions

and usages of men ; it is so far from being on this account liable to censure, that it manifests an analogy to that every-day habit of men, which is in truth nothing but the will and intention of God, and it harmonizes with the character of God as Creator of the world. In fact, all the modes of speech, as much as those of action, which are universal or nearly universal among men, must be supposed to have been disposed by Providence, and to have flowed from Him : and it would therefore have been a real objection, if these modes of speech had been abandoned in Scripture, if all figure had been rejected, and if nothing but dry and abstract expression had found employment in it.

Had Scripture, indeed, not given us the means of understanding such expressions as are placed at the head of this section ; had it not given us to know, by decisive statement, that God is high above all His works, that His ways are not as our ways, and His thoughts not as our thoughts, that He is righteous in all His ways and holy in all His works, that just and true are all His ways, that He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, that He is not a man that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should repent, — then

indeed we might have been led to entertain low notions of God, and to attribute to Him the passions of men as truly His own. But Scripture has in truth given us the most sublime and exalted characters of God, and has afforded to the Church of England ample right to state as one of its articles of belief, as founded on the word of God, that "there is but one living and true God, without body, parts, or passions, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness."

I will add a few words in detail. As anger and vengeance are frequently ascribed to the Almighty, both in sacred and in profane writers, and appear to occasion but little difficulty, I need not say more in explanation of those passions as applied to the Divine Being. But, as the ascription of *jealousy* to Him seems to strike objectors with more surprise, and to give a greater scope to the sarcasm of the profane, it may be as well to give here the exposition of the learned Poole on the character of God as given by Himself in Exodus, "I am a jealous God:" I am impatient of any partner in my love and worship, and full of wrath against them that give my glory to images, as jealousy is the rage of a

man (Prov. vi. 34) against the defiler of his marriage-bed. God is pleased to call and account Himself the husband of His church and people, (Jer. ii. 2, Hos. ii. 19,) and therefore idolatry is called *adultery*, (Deut. xxxi. 16, Jer. iii. 3, 10,) and God's anger against idolaters *jealousy*." I will add also the explanation of the same learned writer on Gen. vi. 6: "This is spoken after the manner of man, and signifies an alienation of God's heart and affections from men for their wickedness, whereby God behaves towards them like one that is truly penitent and grieved, destroying the works of his own hands." And here I cannot resist finishing this section by citing the elegant words of a modern writer: * "Observe how God condescends to our human conceptions. Though His 'gifts and callings' are without repentance, yet mark how often He speaks of its repenting Him because of the groanings of His people, of its repenting Him of the evil. 'How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.' (Hos. xi. 8.) Here

* Krummacher's Eight Sermons.

are *human* language, and the expressions of a father's heart. See, again, how, in order to give us joyful ideas of the glory that shall be revealed, Christ adapts Himself to our conceptions, by borrowing His imagery from our human delights and earthly recreations, when He speaks of that glory as a feast for invited guests, a marriage supper, a dwelling in His Father's house, in a city with beautiful streets and buildings; an adorning with precious stones and shining metals; a partaking of pleasant fruits; repose in paradise beneath the tree of life. Why is all this?—because our present condition, compared with that in futurity, is only as childhood compared with manhood."

SECTION V.

GENESIS vi. 6.—“ *It repented the Lord, that he had made man.*”

NUMBERS xxiii. 19.—“ *God is not a man that he should lie ; neither the son of man, that he should repent.*”

PROVERBS xxvi. 4, 5.—“ *Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.*”

ACTS ix. 7.—“ *The men, who journeyed with him, stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.*”

ACTS xxii. 9.—“ *And they that were with him saw indeed the light, and were afraid ; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.*”

ROMANS iii. 28.—“ *We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.*”

JAMES ii. 24.—“ *Ye see, then, that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.*”

I have set down these apparently contradic-

tory passages, as examples of such apparent contradiction. Others might have been selected, but these will be sufficient. Nor is it my purpose to reconcile them, for this has often been done before; but merely to bring them before the reader as instances of a particular class of objections brought by sceptical writers against revelation.

We are too apt to take assumed contradictions as real, and to argue from them against the truths of Scripture; as if there were no apparent anomalies in nature also, and as if the same system of acting would not destroy natural religion.

It is well observed by Mr. Gyles, in his *Attempt to ascertain the meaning of Luke xxi. 28*, (p. 39)—“To reconcile a seeming contradiction, or to explain a peculiar fact in a narration, is sometimes of the utmost importance, and furnishes a strong evidence for the truth of the whole. In the works of nature, and in the volume of Revelation, we recognise the same divine hand. Apparent anomalies, upon closer investigation, are found to confirm more strongly the general law.”

The apparent contradictions to the goodness and mercy of God must be admitted to be many.

When we see a spider darting on a fly ; a fly starving in a spider's web ; a worm cut in two by the spade ; a wounded bird crawling famished in a wood ; a cow incessantly stung by a multitude of flies on a summer's day ; a man agonized by the stone or tic-douloureux—we are constrained to confess that there are anomalies in the government of God which often baffle our attempt to explain them. Then the wisdom of God is sometimes at apparent variance with many things which take place in the world : as the vast tracts of country which for centuries are traversed by none but barbarians and noxious animals : the feuds and wars between man and man : the imperfection of our knowledge : the deception of mankind by the appearance of the heavenly bodies : and the fact that there should be a single being in the world who should dare to deny the existence of its very Maker.

Then what can be greater contrasts to each other than what are continually occurring before us ? View and compare together the festivities of a marriage and the gloominess of a funeral : a beautiful young maiden, and a decrepit wrinkled old woman : a fine day in June, and a murky day in November : a thickly-peopled

metropolis and a barren wilderness:—these and numerous other comparisons may be made, which we might *à priori* think it vain to attempt to harmonize, and to bring under the government of one and the same Author.

There are, then, many anomalies and seeming contrarieties in the natural world; and yet these do not cause us to doubt the existence, or question the goodness and wisdom, of the Divine Being. Let us then be consistent, and not be caught by the first intimation of apparent contradictions in the Scripture; still less let us have a feverish desire to find them out, and to glory in them as giving us a pretext for throwing off the obligations of the word of God. Let us patiently investigate before we condemn: and, even if we cannot always extricate ourselves from difficulties, let us distrust ourselves, however, and reason concerning Revelation as Dr. Paley has reasoned concerning Nature: “The uncertainty of one thing does not necessarily affect the certainty of another thing. Our ignorance of many points need not suspend our assurance of a few.”*

It may not be foreign from the subject to notice that there are not only difficulties in

* Nat. Phil. ch. v.

reconciling points in Scripture, but that difficulties exist also in understanding its signification. But these are to be found in other ancient writers. Thucydides and Tacitus, Homer and Horace,—ay, and our own older writers,—require much study and perseverance to enable us to comprehend their meaning. Diversities of style, of allusion, of customs and manners, all contribute to obscure the meaning of ancient writings; but then they are found not only in sacred, but in pagan writers. In other words, Scripture maintains in this, as in all other points, a strict analogy with the natural course of things.

SECTION VI.

GENESIS viii. 20.—“ *Noah took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.*”

Sacrifices, it is said, are barbarous, and can answer no good purpose.

It is needless to show here that sacrifices have been common to nearly all the religions of the world ; for it has been frequently proved, and it is a fact denied by none.

There arise then two suppositions, either of which indicates the propriety of sacrifices. The first is, that sacrifices were originally enjoined by the Almighty as typical of the great sacrifice which was afterwards to be made by Christ, and afterwards were engrafted into false religions,—a supposition which immediately puts them on a divine foundation, and therefore vindicates their propriety. The second is, that they originated in the wants and necessities of mankind, being deeply seated in human nature ; men being naturally conscious that they are offenders against the majesty of God, and

naturally flying to some method of making atonement for their guilt, and of transferring it to some vicarious victim. Revelation in this case is in unison with this general feeling, and displays an agreement between itself and the common sentiments of man, which refers us to one great Being as the inspirer of both. And thus the character of Godhead, "He knew what was in man," * appears as truly stamped on the Old Testament, as it was observed to be on the New.

It may be said, indeed, that in this latter mode of reasoning we might establish the pretensions of every one of the numerous religions in the world. And it must be allowed, that, had we nothing else to offer for our religion, this in itself might not establish its truth more than that of others. But, in the first place, I am in this work principally concerned in removing objections; and if objections in any part of it are made to recoil on their supporters, this is only in the manner of a corollary, and not the proposition itself. And, secondly, it should be remarked, that we must compare the pretensions of other religions in other points. As it is observed in the works of nature, that it

* John ii. 25.

is not one flower which makes the spring, nor one swallow which makes the summer: so it is not one argument which establishes the truth of the christian religion, which depends on a great variety of argument. It would have been a great deficiency, and have allowed room for doubt, had our religion passed over this natural feature in the character of men: and so far the doctrine of sacrifices looks well for all religions. But when we come to examine the entire fabric of the other religions of the world, we find that they want that variety of evidence which is essential to constitute the soundness of their foundation. Certainly, as Paley has well observed,* “in judging of Christianity, the question lies between this religion and none; for if the Christian religion be not credible, no one, with whom we have to do, will support the pretensions of any other.”

* Preparatory Considerations of the Evidences.

SECTION VII.

GEN. xxii. 18. — “*In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice.*”

It has seemed incongruous, that the righteousness of one individual should have such universal results.

The incongruity complained of is more in appearance than in reality. For how many persons does the history of the world exhibit, whose virtues or talents have been the means of the most solid and enduring benefits to their country and the world, both in their own and in succeeding generations? One man sets an example to a nation, a nation to the world: and alterations once effected last more or less corrupted for centuries.

Consider the permanent advantages derived to the world through the exertions of such humane individuals as Howard and Wilberforce—men who may be called the benefactors not only of their own, but “of all time.” Con-

sider the enduring nature of the improvements communicated to the world by the genius of the discoverers of steam, of gas, and of printing. Consider the opening of whole continents to civilization and the arts, through the perseverance of such navigators as Columbus and Cook.

On a more limited, and yet on a great scale, we might mention the benefits conferred on nations by a Solon, a Cincinnatus, a Newton and a Laplace, a Washington and a Nelson. And thus of Peter the Great it has been observed, that "perhaps no country ever exhibited, in so short a time, the wonders that may be effected *by the genius and exertions of one man*. At his accession he found his subjects of all ranks involved in the greatest ignorance and barbarism. He civilised his subjects, disciplined his armies, built cities and fortresses, and created a navy. These national improvements have been still further prosecuted since his time, and Russia now holds her rank among the nations of the world, of which human foresight, at the commencement of the eighteenth century, could have formed no conception."* Thus it is, that the energy and talents of one

* Dr. Brookes' Gazetteer, Art. Russia.

man produce results which extend and enlarge through succeeding generations.

Such men shine like lights in their own age, and reflect their rays on those which follow. They receive the appellations of great and good from their contemporaries, and posterity still continues to extol their names, and to experience the happy effect of their services. On them the eyes of nations and of men are fixed, as the rescuers of their country from slavery, vice, or barbarity, and as the introducers of blessings which are felt for centuries after they themselves have ceased to take a part in the business of the world.

Where, then, is the objection to the promise that through the virtuous obedience of Abraham all the nations of the earth should be blessed? That promise, we have seen, is analogous to the common course of nature, and to the history of mankind.

SECTION VIII.

EXOD. iv. 21.—“*The Lord said unto Moses, See that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go.*”

ISA. vi. 9.—“*Go and tell this people: Hear ye, indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and be healed.*”

ISA. xxix. 10.—“*The Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets hath he covered.*”

EZEK. xiv. 9.—“*I the Lord have deceived that prophet.*”

2 THESS. ii. 11.—“*God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.*”

ISA. lxiii. 17.—“*Why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear?*”

THESE passages have been long considered

as rocks of stumbling and of offence, in the way of the searcher into the truth of Scripture; and yet they seem capable of a satisfactory explanation.

One thing certainly appears clear, that,—after such a variety of passages, all asserting the same thing, we must allow—and the doubting inquirer will scarcely be satisfied with less—Scripture holds the doctrine so much objected to, that God hardens, blinds, stupifies, deceives, deludes.

Many persons soften, indeed, these passages, by maintaining that they signify only the *allowance* or *permission*, by the Divine Being, that men should be hardened, blinded, deceived. But they seem not to be aware, that, although they should succeed in establishing this sense of *permission*, the difficulty is only removed a step further, but not destroyed: for a reply is still demanded to the question, Why does God permit it?

If, then, Scripture is bold, let us be bold also in maintaining it, and let us not act as if we were afraid or ashamed of its language. And why should we be? It was the same kind of fear or shame which led the Magians to invent the doctrine of two independent gods,—the one

the author of good, the other of evil. For, thinking it was very difficult to account for the existence of evil in the world, they imagined they could best explain this anomaly by their new scheme. And some learned men have with reason believed, that it was the object of Isaiah* to overthrow this device, when he wrote those remarkable words: "I am the Lord, and there is none else: I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things." Agreeably to the question by Amos,† "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?"

Some, indeed, are disposed to understand these expressions only of bodily evil; but then evil of any kind produces the disposition to inquire still, why God made or did it. If we observe bodily evil, particularly as it affects the brute creation, we are left in great uncertainty; and, evidently, the reason which would explain bodily evil, would go far to explain moral evil also.

Scripture maintains, then, the just analogy between things natural and things moral. Men are made blind, stupid, and deceived in

* Isa. xlv. 7. † Amos. iii. 6.

natural things : they are blinded, stupified, and deceived in moral things. And as God is said to perform the acts in the former case, He is also, with great uniformity of plan, said to perform them in the latter.

But now we must observe, that God is said to do that Himself, which He does by the agency of others. By a strong usage of this language it is said, that “unto Adam and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.”* Thus Hooker observes:† “Of Moses it is said that he wrote all the words of God, not by his own private notion and device : for God taketh this act to himself: *I have written* : Hos. viii. 12.” But, indeed, this manner of attributing immediate agency to the Divine Being, is common to language in general. If, therefore, God is said to have hardened Pharaoh’s heart, undoubtedly it is to be understood that He did so by the instrumentality of another : that is of Satan. Thus God is represented as having put it into the heart of Satan to tempt Job : “The Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth ?”‡

* Gen. iii. 21.

† Eccl. Pol. b. i. 13.

‡ Job i. 8.

Now it can be easily seen that there may be a point in a sinner's career, where God "gives him up to a reprobate mind,"* where He leaves him to himself, or "lets him alone,"† and commits him to the consequences of his sin. The state of such a man becomes worse and worse; he becomes *hardened* to all sense of shame, and is, in the Scripture phrase, "past feeling." He is under a judicial blindness, and is in the situation of a man who has thrown himself from a precipice, and who *cannot but* roll forward.

Such a person, then, has been hardened by the Divine Being through the instrumentality of Satan, "to whom he has been delivered."‡ And if there appears any objection to such a state of things as this, this objection should lead us, not to a rejection of Revelation merely, but to the rejection of the Being of God: for we cannot comprehend the reasons why evil exists at all in the government of an all-powerful and all-merciful Being. It should lead us not timidly and meanly to stop in mid-course, but to carry our assault to the very throne of God: for, if I mistake not, it is not only Scrip-

* Rom. i. 28.

† Hos. iv. 17.

‡ 1 Tim. i. 20.

ture which teaches us the doctrine objected to, but Nature, which utters her voice through a Syrian Pagan:* “Whom God wishes to destroy, He makes mad† first.” But particularly through the Roman orator:‡—“Phrenzy and madness is the punishment irrevocably ordained by the immortal gods against the impious and the guilty. Personal villany, personal guilt, personal crimes and presumption, rob me of the use of reason and soundness of judgment.” And the fact that there is a point beyond which correction is impossible, is plainly supposed by the Grecian orator in his eloquent address to the gods :§—“Hear me, ye immortal gods ; infuse a better spirit into these men ; inspire their minds with purer sentiments ; or, *if their natures are not to be reformed*, pursue them by land and sea, pursue them to destruction.” And by Seneca, in a passage which will be found quoted in p. 72.

* Publius Syrus.

† Cic. in Pison. 20, Duncan.

‡ For I cannot but understand the verb *dementat* in an active sense.

§ Demosth. de Coron. in fin.

SECTION IX.

EXOD. xiv. 16. —“ *Lift up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it : and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.*”

1 KINGS xvii. 6. —“ *And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening.*”

JOHN ix. 7. —“ *And Jesus said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam.*”

It is thought strange that, in the operation of a miracle, any external means should be necessary, as God should be supposed to work the miracle in an immediate manner.

But why should we think that God should act differently here from His general plan of bringing about His designs? In the natural world He gives His blessing : and it follows that, if we till and sow, we reap ; or if we open our windows, we receive the light of the sun. We ought then to expect, that when He gives His preternatural blessing, the same order

should be maintained: that we must stretch forth our hands,* or wash in the pool, if we would be healed; and that we must let down our nets for a draught,† if we would take the fish. We ought to expect that God will have His wonders performed in the manner and mode He particularly chooses: nor be surprised if, after St. Paul had declared that “there should be no loss of any man’s life” in the storm at sea, yet he should declare with as strong an assurance, “Except ye abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.”‡

By this procedure God would show us, that we must not be indolent, but use our endeavours, even when He deigns to help us out of the course of His Providence: He would compel us to use means, that we might see and confess our dependence on His power: He would make us know that He is not another, but the same God as ever; and that He is determined to preserve that connexion between means and end, which marks His general dealings with mankind.

Far, then, from throwing blame on Scripture for these representations, we should acknowledge their agreement with the divine economy

* Matt. xii. 13. † Luke v. 4. ‡ Acts xxvii. 22, 31.

in the ordinary affairs of life. We should confess that God acts Himself as He would have us to act, when He commands us, by His Apostle, " Let all things be done decently and in order."* We should be impressed with the truth of that system of grace, which in so many varied modes preserves a harmony with the natural world, and sustains a constant identity between the God of Nature and the God of Revelation.

* 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

SECTION X.

EXOD. xx. 5.—“ *Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.*” So Jer. xxxii. 18.

THERE are some points of knowledge so obvious and on the surface, that we wonder how it could have happened that any should have been ignorant of them; or where they could have buried themselves, so as not to behold the clear light around them. And so it is in the present instance: we are led to express our surprise, and to ask, how it is possible that any should be so ignorant of what is going on in the world, as not to have seen numerous illustrations of the truth of what is stated in the passage before us? Families, which had been in affluence, suddenly ruined through the ill conduct of the heads of them, and reduced from happiness to misery, from abundance to penury, from high station to obscurity, not

through the fault or ill desert of their own, but through the fault and ill desert of the parents: a mania for speculation or gambling, for eccentric and unaccountable schemes, for luxury and show, for ambition or profligacy, on the part of the parents, dissipating substantial fortunes, and leaving the helpless children to beggary and confusion: a spirit of innovation and disaffection leading to the commission of treason, to the forfeiture of honours and estates, and involving with that of the offenders the ruin of their dependents: cities and kingdoms subjugated and enslaved through the folly or bad conduct of their governors: all these and similar events are constantly taking place; and yet some are so blind as to persist in not seeing them, and through mere wilful ignorance, for which they have no excuse, to censure Revelation for what is in the most perfect harmony with the daily course of Providence.

These seem to be truths which require no confirmation; and yet it may be advisable to put the subject out of all question by citing a few passages from pagan writers, who have given their unconscious testimony to the declarations of Scripture.

“You care little,” says Horace,* “about committing a crime which will hurt your posterity, who will be undeserving of the punishment.” Again,† “The bitter fates and the crime of a brother’s death have pursued the Romans, ever since the blood of the guiltless Remus flowed on the ground, to be atoned for by his posterity.”—Where Davidson has the following remark: “This is a very substantial proof of the opinion of the heathens, that the crime of one single man might bring down the anger of the gods upon his posterity, and involve them in those punishments which might seem to be merited only by the original offender.” Again:‡ “You shall be punished, you Roman, for the crimes of your ancestors, until you rebuild the falling temples.”—Where Davidson remarks again: “The wisest among the heathen have acknowledged the truth, that, till reparation is made, the posterity of criminals are liable to the punishment due to the offence of their fathers.” And thus Virgil:§ “Already have we paid sufficiently with our blood for the perjury of Troy.” In the same manner, the ancients have observed that

* Hor. Od. i. 28. † Ib. Epod. vii. 19.

‡ Ib. Od. iii. 1. § Virg. Geo. i. 502.

the society of the wicked involves the good in their calamities. Thus Horace remarks:* “Often has Jupiter, in consequence of being neglected, mingled in punishment the pure with the guilty.” And Euripides observes:† “In the calamities of the immoral, God has destroyed the moral and the guiltless man.” And in a general manner Hesiod has observed:‡ “Often has an entire city derived evil from a bad man.”

It is useless to multiply quotations.§ But, before I close these remarks, I must attempt to clear up a supposed inconsistency in this passage of Exodus as compared with that in Ezekiel xviii. 19: “The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son.” The passage in Exodus alludes clearly to temporal punishments, that in Ezekiel to those of a future state. So obvious is the answer to an objection, which, I am sorry to state, has, with other points, induced an amiable man to abandon Revelation. On the contrary, the following passage in Psalm cx. 14. is to be understood

* Hor. Od. iii. 2. † Eur. Suppl. 226. ‡ Hes. Erg. 240.

§ See more in the note of Lobeck on Soph. Aj. 761.

of temporal punishments as affecting the posterity of the persons signified: "Let the iniquity of his father be remembered: and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out." And in the same manner is to be understood the passage in the Litany of the Church: "Remember not our sins, nor the sins of our forefathers."

SECTION XI.

EXOD. xxv. xxvi. &c. LEVIT. i. ii. &c.

NUMB. xviii. xix.

THE great minuteness in these laws and ceremonies relative to the temple, and to the tribes and priests and meats of the Jews, has been thought trifling and unworthy of the Divine Being.

We will endeavour, presently, to give a *particular* reason for these laws and ceremonies: but at present we are concerned in stating *generally*, that the divine economy has manifested equal minuteness in the ordinary operations of nature. We have not indeed the details of the latter written down by the finger of God, but we have them explicitly marked in His works. It will be anticipated that I speak of the wonderful divisions and subdivisions of the bodies of animals; not only of the general sections of them into head, stomach, liver, intestines, arms and legs, but of the various ramifications of these: fibres, veins, joints, arteries, muscles, &c. Let us

carry this again into the various genera of animals, as men, beasts, birds, fishes, insects, reptiles, and then into the many subdivisions of these. Let us go to the trees, shrubs, and flowers, and observe their nice and complicated texture. And when we have gone over all these things, let us ask, whether there be not a multitude of details in all these works in this one globe corresponding to that of the minutiae in the laws of the Jews. Nay, let us take the laws of man in general, as also manifesting the order of nature: and let us observe how copious and multitudinous these are: so much so, that, according to Paley,* “the laws of this country, including the acts of the legislature, and the decisions of our supreme courts of justice, are not contained in less than fifty folio volumes.” Let us see also the divisions and subdivisions of the arts and the sciences, and mark how numerous are all these. In general, let us observe how these things together bear out the maxim that art is long, and life too short to be acquainted with it: how those most know their ignorance, who have studied to subdue it most; and then let us refuse, if we are able, to see

* Pal. Mor. Phil. book i. ch. iv.

the analogy of the proceedings of the Divine Being in all this copiousness and minutiae in His works and in His word. If He has thought fit in the natural world to adopt such complex structures, and to allow human laws and human knowledge to receive such extensive ramifications, it might be expected that He would do so in a more immediate revelation of His will, and especially if there were sufficient grounds for it.

And there seem to have been special reasons why the Almighty should introduce so cumbrous a ritual, and impose it on the Jews. We think it was absolutely necessary for keeping up a distinct people on the earth, as maintainers of the doctrine of one true God, apart from the idolatries of the Gentiles, and as treasurers of the prophecies, which were at length to receive their verification in the appearance of the Saviour of the world. And, indeed, so admirably has this purpose been secured, this distinction been sustained, that, in the first place, whereas the Jews worshipped one God, all the rest of mankind embraced polytheism; and that, in the second, the Jew even at this day preserves his distinguishing characteristics.

SECTION XII.

DEUT. v. 29.—“ *O that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them !*”

PS. xxxi. 13.—“ *Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways !*”

MATT. xiii. 37.—“ *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered (Greek, have I wished to gather) thy children together, and ye would not ! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.*”

THESE pathetic expressions have been considered as marking weakness. It is asked why God, instead of wishing and lamenting, did not prevent the evils which were impending.

The passages from the Old Testament are to be classed under those mentioned in Sect. 4. The Divine Being is represented with human affections, as pitying the unhappy cou-

dition of the Jews, and wishing it were possible to relieve it.

Yet, although this is conceded, it is not to be denied, and Scripture maintains the proposition, that the Divine Being circumscribes even His own power within certain limits. Thus we are informed in the New Testament, what no Theist indeed could refuse to acknowledge that "it is impossible for God to lie," and that "He cannot deny Himself." One divine attribute must not be sacrificed to exhibit another more prominently: but they must all act in simultaneous concert, and check the operation of each other. They must blend harmoniously together, and not contradict or oppose each other. Hence, although mercy is a distinguishing feature in the divine character, yet justice must not be deprived of her functions. "Mercy rejoices against judgment," as far as and as long as is consistent with the righteous administration of God, but no further.

Now observe the state of things in the world of nature. Men are allowed to go on for years in the commission of crime, until at length justice arrests their course, and the day of mercy and forbearance is past. They have

long resisted all the divine admonitions in the conscience, and the time is fully come for punishment. Nothing averts it, and God does not interpose to save them from ruin.

So also, in the world of grace, men resist light, and destruction seizes on them. God has, as it were, exhausted his offers of mercy, and asks, "What could have been done more to them, that I have not done?"* I will let them alone,† I can show them no further compassion, and they must be left as the monuments of rejected grace."

Viewed, then, as affected with human passions, the Divine Being, as He loves the happiness of His creatures, may be represented as pitying such calamities, even though He does not stretch forth his hand to prevent them. And no further weakness appears in such a procedure, but what arises from the absolute necessity which exists of reconciling mercy with justice: and such weakness, it is evident, must be merely apparent, and not real. We may wonder, indeed, why a plan could not have been devised in the Infinite Mind, which should have excluded pain and punishment altogether: but we find that these occur as

* Isa. v. 4,

† Hos. iv. 17.

much in the world we inhabit, as we expect they will occur in that which is to come.

The preceding observations are made in reference to the Divine Being. But when Christ is represented as weeping over the fall of Jerusalem, and uttering a wish that it had anticipated and prevented its ruin by repentance, this was doubtless said without any figure or metaphor: for Christ was truly man as he was truly God; "as his brethren are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same,"* and was "touched with the feelings of our infirmities."†

* Heb. ii. 14

† Ib. iii. 15.

SECTION XIII.

DEUT. ix. 5.—“ *Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thy heart, dost thou go to possess their land : but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which He sware unto thy fathers. The Lord giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness ; for thou art a stiff-necked people.*”

WHY, it is asked, should the Jews have been called on to dispossess a people of their country for their crimes, when they themselves were guilty also ?

Those who urge this objection, overlook the usual method by which the Divine Being administers the government of the world. It is one of the characteristics of His mercy, as mentioned by Thomson in his concluding Hymn, that from seeming evil He educes good ; and this fact is illustrated not more in His sovereign disposal of kingdoms, than in the displays of

His providence in the animal and vegetable kingdom. Thus tempests and hurricanes purify the air from malaria and vermin; in the body, the agony of the gout expels more dangerous diseases; and extensive conflagrations have been known, as in our own metropolis, to remove the unhealthiness arising from narrow streets and crowded habitations. "How many casualties," observes L'Estrange, in his *Abstract of the Morals of Seneca*, (p. 117,) "and difficulties are there that we dread as insupportable mischiefs, which, upon further thought, we find to be mercies and benefits? As banishment, poverty, loss of relations, sickness, disgrace: some are cured by the lance, by fire, hunger, thirst, taking out of bones, lopping off limbs, and the like."

As, then, God employs this mode of remedying evils by evils in the animal world, ought it to excite our surprise, if He employs the same means in other parts of His dominions? And yet many are to be found who raise an objection to Revelation founded on this constitution of nature. This conduct, however, is not confined to impugners of the truth of Scripture, but is with singular inconsistency pursued by some who profess to receive it as the word

of God. As the unbeliever assails the authority of the Old Testament, because it represents the Almighty as driving out guilty men through the agency of men who were themselves guilty ; so the Romanist assails the authority of Protestantism, because it drove out what we believe to be the evil doctrines of Romanism by evil instruments. And here I shall cite the remarks of a contemporary writer, who has observed the same analogy of Nature with Revelation, which is here insisted on, in speaking of the Reformation. " Into the motives of Henry VIII. I am not called upon to inquire ; nor has the character of the king anything to do with the Reformation itself. It is sufficient for us to know that Jehovah selects His own instruments ; that He is not tied to the use of any particular means ; that oftentimes He employs such as, according to human calculation, are most unsuited to the ends to be accomplished, and that good frequently results from evil, and place and order spring from war and confusion. If, therefore, the passions of Henry were instrumental in effectuating a separation of this country from Rome, no one can in consequence plead that the cause of the Reformation was an unrighteous one ; since, on the same ground,

we should be constrained to reject as curses many blessings which are showered on the sons of men. We ought rather to be struck with admiration at the providence of God, who can cause even the unruly wills and affections of sinful men to promote His own glory, as well as *the wrath of the wicked to praise Him*. Who can doubt that the late ruler of France, Napoleon, was an instrument, though an unconscious one, in the hand of God, for scourging the guilty nations of Europe?—yet, like the Assyrian of old, ‘the rod of God’s anger,’ he was laid aside when his work was finished.”*

I cannot but indulge the hope that the arguments in this section are a just answer to the objections of two very different species of reasoners.

But, by way of corollary, let me observe that the case of Jacob and Esau (Gen. ch. xxvii.,) may be resolved into the same class of objections as the preceding, for here also the Almighty displays His sovereign power in making even the bad passions of our nature subserve the purposes of His will. The mother and son enter into an unhallowed compact to deprive, by the grossest fraud, the elder son of

* Lathbury’s State of Popery, &c., p. 5.

his father's blessing,—a blessing of no common character, but a “last, solemn, extraordinary, and prophetic benediction.”* And this bad combination is favoured and promoted by the Almighty,† and brought by Him to a successful termination. This case, then, is analogous to those which we have considered before in this section. We must remark, however, that Esau had previously rendered himself obnoxious to punishment by his reckless sale of his birthright; and moreover, that it was promised him by authority from God, that although he should now serve his brother, yet the time would come when he “should break his yoke from off his neck.”‡

In the same manner we may dispose of the objection made to Gen. xlv. 5—8; for there also God employs the vices of men to effectuate His purposes.

* Poole on Gen. xxvii. 4. † Id. ib. 1. and 23.

‡ Gen. xxvii. 40.

SECTION XIV.

JOSH. xii. 7—24 ; x. 28—43.

THE destruction of the Canaanite nations and kings by Joshua, as recorded in these passages, has been made the subject of much attack.

But the misapprehension of these passages originates from our not seeing the hand of God in the common affairs of the world. We take as a matter of course the daily occurrences of life, terrible and shocking as many of them are, and we find no fault in them,—nor indeed, if we did, would all our censures in the least degree avail us ;—but the moment we read that God has positively ordained any terrible calamities to be executed by man, then we become offended, and make complaints.

But this is a mistaken mode of thinking. We must bring the actual state of things to bear on this point. We must not lay out of our view the unhappy incidents we are in the habit of hearing of ; the confiscations, imprisonments, banishments, and executions ; the

accidents of various kinds ; the diseases, fevers, plagues, and pestilences ; the famines, wars, fires, shipwrecks, hurricanes, earthquakes and inundations, which are frequently taking place in the world, and cutting short life, or destroying property and happiness. We know that these things happen, and yet we dare not on their account impeach the sovereignty of God, or deny His right to use His creatures as He thinks proper.

Is there anything very uncommon for a general and his army to devastate and depopulate a country ? and for whole races to be extirpated ? And yet nothing occurs without the *knowledge* of God. His alleged commission to Joshua was direct ; but He indirectly gave a commission to Alaric and Napoleon. Indeed we must go further ; for, as nothing can take place without the *will* of God, we may say that He appointed Alaric as much as He did Joshua ; the only difference being, that in the case of the latter, He made a public declaration of His designs ; in that of the former, He was contented with the tacit operation of nature. Indeed, men have put this very interpretation on the subject, for they have called Alaric THE SCOURGE OF GOD.

Again : it is recorded in history that 185,000 Assyrians were slain in their camp in one night. This account we read, and we make no murmur. But when we hear it is added that these were slain “ by the angel of the Lord,”* then we begin to tax God with the act, and call in question His right to act in so summary a manner. We forget that this is God’s world, equally when He audibly or sensibly ordains, as when He silently directs, the affairs of men. We forget that our property, our connexions—ay, and our lives also, belong to Him, and that we have no further right to them, after His fiat has gone out against our further enjoyment of them. As it was He who gave us these things, not ourselves, so He has a right to take them away : at least, whatever we may think, He shows His sovereignty in doing so.

Away then with these puerile objections. It is enough if we have good evidences to believe that in the destruction of these Canaanite nations there was a direct commission from God. For a real commission from God must necessarily sanctify and justify its execution, however painful and terrible it may be. And thus, if there is reason to believe from other circum-

* Isa. xxxvii. 36.

stances that Joshua was divinely commissioned, then are sanctioned and vindicated all the acts done by him.

And so much for the destruction of parts of mankind by Joshua. But the above reasoning will as fully apply to the destruction of the meaner animals by the prophets or apostles of God. "Go," said Jehovah to Saul, "and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, *ox and sheep, camel and ass.*"* Yes, and God acts in this very manner in the visible creation. "Go," says God in His providence to the storm and to the earthquake, "go and smite man and woman, *ox and sheep, camel and ass.*" And thus the pagan poet, when he is describing the tremendous effects of a flood, does not omit, in his catalogue of disasters, *the cattle*† which have been swept away by its fury.—I will just add here, that on similar principles is vindicated the destruction of the swine by our Lord, as recorded in the Gospel.‡

Only, in short, let it be shown there is good reason for concluding that acts of terrible exe-

* 1 Sam. xv. 3. † Horace, Ode iii. 39.

‡ Matt. viii. 32.

cution are done by the command of God, then they receive complete vindication, and we are bound to acknowledge them as flowing from His sovereign will. For all creation are under His sway, and He gives and takes away life and all its enjoyments from every creature as seemeth to Him best, and in the manner also which seemeth to Him best. Men are but instruments of His will, and that, too, often unconsciously. Cyrus was but effecting the design of God, when he was fulfilling his own design; for it had been said of him by Jehovah, "He shall perform all my pleasure."*

* Isa. xlv. 28.

SECTION XV.

1 SAM. xxv. 22, and the like ; with GEN. xix. 4 ; HABAK. ii. 16 ; ROM. i. 26, 27, &c.

It is thought strange that God should have allowed of such expressions and statements as occur in the above passages, knowing that they would be read aloud to congregations, to the discomfiture of female modesty.

But, if we will look into the world of nature, we shall find that the Almighty has not shown (if I may be allowed the expression) such scrupulous and refined nicety in the works of creation, or in the order of His providence, as this objection would suppose. To adduce instances is a matter which itself requires delicacy, and this is a proof how much the Bible here symphonizes with Nature.

Are there no other occasions, then, on which female modesty is offended and put to the blush ? Do not the very actions, referred to in the first passage at the head of this section, often supply such occasions, as well as similar

ones which may be predicated also of one of the species of our domestic animals, and of the two most useful of our larger animals? Are there no circumstances connected with the laws of succession in animal nature, as they come almost daily before our eyes, which supply such occasions? Is female modesty never offended in submitting the most painful disclosures to medical men?—in being obliged to give evidence in court on the most delicate investigations?—or abruptly and painfully to leave a court at their commencement? And, to extend these remarks to boys, are not expressions in the profane writers read by boys at our public schools, notwithstanding all the attempts at expurgating the text, at variance with the correct remark of the Roman satirist, that the greatest reverence is due to youth? I might add, are no terminations read in Latin words, or idioms in Greek ones, which are strangely offensive to modesty?

It is objected also that there are so many passages in Scripture respecting the travail of mothers, as if nature *herself* had not already evidenced by visible signs the state antecedent to it.

In short, “ we must needs go out of the

world," if we wish to find complete exemption from every wound to the modest eye and to the modest ear. It is true that some of the cases mentioned are of a private rather than of a public nature ; but the question does not so much rest in the greater or less publicity of these things, as in the existence of them, which is not to be denied. And it is true that some of these things are not ordained by God ; but at least they are permitted by Him, and permission here acts equally in its effect with commandment.

Two things are to be observed. In the first case, " to the pure all things are pure ;" and if modesty is confused, it is never endangered by the Scripture representations ; for it has been excellently observed that the Scripture accounts of the most licentious transactions are never given in a licentious spirit ; and, secondly, I think it possible that things may come among men to a state of overwrought delicacy, which was never intended (of course I do not say contemplated) by the Author of nature. It is certain, at least, that in private life very serious maladies arise from the too delicate refinements of the laws of society.

SECTION XVI.

2 SAM. v. 13.—“ *And David took him more concubines.*”

WHY, it is asked, should concubines be allowed to these men of God then, and not to us now ?

This may be referred to the class of difficulties considered below, on Matt. v. The observations there made will apply to the difficulty before us ; but, in a more particular way, we observe that the different circumstances of the world may require a different rule of life ; and that of these, and of this, God cannot but be the best judge. At all events we see, in almost everything else, that mankind has been variously fettered or free in the same things. Thus, the Asiatics are not now allowed wine ; the Jews were not allowed pork ; the Romanists are generally not allowed meat in Lent ; the Persians were not allowed such natural actions as spitting or blowing the nose ; and the Chinese women are not allowed the natural growth and use of the feet ;—and all this, though other

people are or were under no restrictions in these things, and though the same people were, perhaps in all these things, at other times, left unrestricted.

Look, too, at the different degrees of liberty of action which men enjoy at different stages of their lives ; look at the different state of freedom of political action in different countries, or in the same countries at different times ; look at the difference of different persons, and of the same persons at different times, as to health, riches, power, and happiness. And thus does the world at large vindicate the Scripture in the difficulty before us. For if God, in the course of His natural providence, gives to the same or to different nations and individuals different liberties and restrictions, surely He must have a right to give or withhold such a license as that which forms the basis of our present subject ; and surely we must on our parts be called upon to submit without a murmur to His pleasure.

One remark must be added. Since we are forbidden concubinage now, we are apt to attach to it an idea of sin in itself. But this is a mistake. Nothing is sin but what God disallows, and when he disallows it. And all things in

themselves are indifferent and innocent until forbidden. And thus the apostle argues: "I had not known sin, but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." What has been since stamped among men with the highest character of guilt, was virtuous in the case of Cain and his sister.

Thus we act wrongly when we encourage ourselves in, and suppose that God is indifferent to, virtue and vice, because He thinks fit at different times to destroy their relative differences, and to make that virtuous or vicious which He had previously reprobated or approved.

SECTION XVII.

2 SAM. xxii. 17.—“*David spake unto the Lord :
Lo, I have sinned, and done wickedly ; but
these sheep, (i. e. my people,) what have they
done ? Let thine hand, I pray thee, be
against me and against my father's house.*”

IT is a well-known constitution of nature that subjects suffer for the follies and crimes of their rulers. Horace has stated this truth very clearly : “ Kings are mad, and their Grecian subjects suffer for it.”* We may arraign this scheme of Providence, but our accusations will never make any alteration in it. And we may arraign the conduct of the Almighty as represented in the words of David, as indeed it raised surprise in the mind of David himself ; but that conduct is in strict unison with God's government of the natural world, which, as we have said, will receive no alteration, murmur we ever so long or loudly against it. In short, if we will fight against God, we must fail in the contest ; for surely poor weak mortals can

* Hor. Epistle i. 2.

never overturn the dominion of the Lord God of heaven and earth. Let us rather modestly confess our ignorance, and be assured that it is that ignorance alone which prevents us from discovering the reasons of the divine proceedings.

The reader will see other remarks bearing on the same point in the section on Exod. xx. 5, and Matt. xxiii. 35, 36.

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SECTION XVIII.

1 KINGS xxi. 29.—“*Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days; but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house.*”

THE justice of this course has been questioned, or rather has been violently assailed. But as the circumstance mentioned here is only a particular or individual application of a much more general case, occurring in Matt. xxiii. 35, 36, the reader is directed to the remarks on that passage. If a general plan of Scripture is cleared from difficulties, specific illustrations of it can carry no new objection.

The Jews mentioned in St. Matthew had indeed not repented, and Ahab had; but this does not invest the subject with any fresh difficulty worthy of consideration.

SECTION XIX.

PSA. ix. 17.—“ *The wicked shall be turned into hell.*”

2 THESS. i. 7.—“ *The Lord Jesus shall be revealed in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those that know not God.*”

Heb. xii. 29.—“ *Our God is a consuming fire.*”
And see PROV. i. 24—31.

It is asked, Why does God not convert, instead of resorting to punishment ?

It is well for the authority of Scripture, that it can appeal from the written to the unwritten word ; that it can refer for the truth of its doctrines to a tribunal, of which few but maniacs deny the equity ; that it can support itself on the same foundations on which are built the laws of the everlasting God. Otherwise, true as its doctrines are, it would have been left to its own bare assertion, and would have had to maintain single-handed the contest with scepticism.

Nor do these remarks seem anywhere more

just than in the case before us. Revelation is accused of pursuing a plan, which, however, is strictly pursued by nature, and which, had it not had the sanction of nature, would have appeared unable to resist the assaults of its adversaries, or even to satisfy the suspicions of its timorous friends.

Let us ask, then, a few simple questions, bearing on the course which Providence has thought fit to take in the government of the world.

What mean our bridewells and prisons, our penitentiaries and houses of correction, our stocks, our galleys, our tread-mills, our gallows? How happens it that offenders are transported for years, and sometimes for life? How is it that shame and disgrace, misery and ruin, embitter the days of the malefactor? How do we account for the remorse of conscience, and the desperate fury of the mind, which compel criminals to declare their crimes, and to deliver themselves into the hands of justice?

We must acknowledge, then, that God, in the usual course of things, acts in His dealings in strict consonance with the strong character of His justice as delineated in the Scripture.

We find that punishment forms an important part of His government in the world. He knows that methods of chastisement are acted on, and He does not anticipate and prevent their application by changing the purposes and the hearts of those who are on the point of making themselves the subjects of it. Where, then, is the wisdom displayed in raising objections to the representations of Scripture, which are in exact concurrence with the daily events of the natural world? Rather, what is not the folly and madness of such conduct? This is certain, that the whole course of the world must be altered to give effect to such objections.

SECTION XX.

PSALM xxxiv. i.—“ *His praise shall continually be in my mouth.*”

REV. vii. 12.—“ *Glory, and thanksgiving, and honour, be to our God for ever and ever.*”

IT is argued that praise and glory as offered to God must be unnecessary, because He must be infinitely glorious in Himself.

Certainly the Divine Being cannot need our praises—the praises of poor low mortals, who are assimilated by Isaiah to grasshoppers, when compared to God, who sitteth above the circle of the heavens. He cannot need our praises, who “is exalted above all blessing and praise.”* He cannot receive accession of happiness from our thanksgivings, for His felicity is independent of precarious accident. And yet praise and glory from mortals may be absolutely necessary on their part as an indication of their feelings towards the Lord of all; and indeed they have elegantly been termed “a sweet necessity.”

* Neh. ix. 5.

Thus earthly fathers merit the meed of gratitude from their children, and benefactors from those whom they have assisted ; and this without regard to the fact, whether this return produces pleasure or profit to the objects of this gratitude. Gratitude, indeed, is an instinct of noble feeling, which is never genuine unless it proceed from the heart by a spontaneous impulse ; not staying to calculate nicely, and consider if it produces satisfaction ; but being borne along by a generous ardour, it feels constrained to pay its offering, and to manifest the sincerity of its devotion. And thus gratitude to God for His unnumbered mercies breathes out its thanksgivings, not because it thinks it is adding anything to the divine felicity, but because it is as a confined fire which labours to be free, and cannot but find at length the means of being so.

So clearly, indeed, did Christ see the necessity, in the very nature of things, of thanksgiving to God, that when some of the Pharisees called upon him to stop the voices of the disciples who were “ praising God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen,” he exclaimed, “ I tell you, that if those should

hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.”*

In fact, the practice of mankind in all ages is opposed to this objection ; for never has the time existed since the creation when praise has not ascended like the incense to Heaven, and when glory has not been given to God’s great name. We may, indeed, as reasonably expect to quench the light of the sun, as to smother the aspirings of gratitude to God in the breast of religious men. Nor certainly can it be pretended that the sincere offerers of praise and glory to God have been the most stupid, or the most ungenerous, or the most vicious, of the sons of men.

What, therefore, cannot be eradicated from the heart must have its foundations deeply based in the laws of nature ; and what is thus based, must be declared by all reasonable men to have the sanction of God Himself, and therefore to be beyond the reach of censure or of cavil.

* Luke xix. 40.

SECTION XXI.

PSALM cxxxvi. 17.—“ *Who smote great kings, for His mercy endureth for ever ;*” 21, “ *And gave away their land for an heritage, for His mercy endureth for ever.*”

It has been thought a strange inference from the mercy of God, that He slays kings, and gives away their kingdoms.

A very little reflection will convince us that there is but little reasonableness in this idea. For was it no mercy to mankind, when Attila, and Nero, and Sylla, were cut off and prevented from committing further ravages on their fellow-creatures? Is there no good to men when offenders of all kinds are punished, and the violators of the peace and property of society are seized on by the strong arm of the law? And is it an uncommon thing to hear it said, when a tyrannical lord, or a griping miser, or a hard-hearted father, hath ceased to live, “ What a blessing that he is gone !” “ What a mercy that he is no longer able to oppress and to tyrannize !”*

Thus Cicero assures Catiline, that “ should

* See more in the remarks on Psalm cxl. 10.

he order him to be instantly seized and put to death, he has reason to believe that good men would rather reproach him with tardiness than with cruelty.”*

The same writer thus also addresses Verres :† —“ A man of this guilty character does not present himself here merely to receive the common punishment due to avarice,—his monstrous and importunate nature calls for some unparalleled punishment. We do not require merely that the goods he has robbed should be restored to their owners : but this man’s punishment must expiate the violated ceremonies of the immortal gods and the blood of many innocents. For you have brought to judgment, not a thief, but a common despoiler ; not an adulterer, but the violator of chastity ; not a sacrilegious person, but the inveterate enemy of all sacred rites ; not a ruffian, but a most savage butcherer of citizens and allies.”

And Seneca addresses in the same spirit a supposed offender :—“ You have an incorrigible spirit ; you have drunk to the dregs the cup of iniquity, and have so mingled it with your very vitals, that it cannot quit you but with them. We will deserve your thanks ; we

* Cic. in Catil. 1. 2.

† Cic. Orat. vi. in Verr.

will rescue you from that madness which disturbs you: we will give you at a moment's notice the only good which remains to you, your death. To kill you is the best mode of showing pity."*

And Juvenal thus consoles Corvinus, who had been defrauded by a pretended friend:†

"Our perjur'd villain, trust me, will proceed,
Till justice take him in some felon deed;
Then from some loathsome dungeon's horrid gloom
The hook shall drag him to his wretched doom;
Or exil'd, he shall join the numerous flocks
Of rogues that starve amid th' Ægean rocks;
You'll hear his doom *with joy*; with joy will find
The heav'nly pow'rs are neither deaf nor blind."

Hence the spectators of the destruction of the spiritual Babylon, as mentioned in the Revelations, (xviii. 20,) cry out in the language of triumph, "*Rejoice* over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her." And hence the prolonged tone of insulting exultation over the king of the same city in the fourteenth chapter of Isaiah, from the fourth to the twentieth verse.

The only point of inquiry is the character of

* Sen. de Irâ, lib. i. † Juv. Sat. xiii. 244, Owen.

the men who are said above to have been slain by the Almighty. But this must rest on the general question of the credibility of the history of the Bible, and is a totally different subject of speculation from that which is here supposed to be taken up by the objector.

SECTION XXII.

PSALM cxl. 10.—“ *Let burning coals fall upon them ; let them be cast into the fire ; into deep pits, that they rise not up again.*”
 cxxix. 6.—“ *Let them be as the grass on the housetops, which withereth afore it groweth up.*” cxliii. 12.—“ *Of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul, for I am thy servant.*” And especially cix. 6—20. And thus also GAL. v. 12 ; 2 TIM. iv. 14.

THESE imprecations have been the subject of much invective ; and even many, who are well disposed to support the authority of the Scripture, sometimes feel surprised at the apparent severity of them.

It has been indeed observed, that these are to be viewed rather as denunciations of what would take place, than as prayers that they should do so. But we will not seek shelter under a plea which is, after all, not agreeable

to the version that has received the sanction of prescription. We are not afraid to understand these passages in the manner in which they are usually presented to us.

The difficulty arises in a great measure from our considering David as a common uninspired man, uninvested with the high character of a prophet of God.

I would reason thus : We must allow that the punishments which God inflicts on sinners are righteous and just. Now let it be allowed that David was so far inspired by God as to know that the punishments which form his prayer were agreeable to the will of God, it will follow that he is justified in such a prayer. For the punishments are just and righteous ; and for what is just and righteous a prophet of God must be perfectly justified in praying.

But again : we might expect that the Divine Being would rather convert than punish ; but we do not always find this expectation to be in accordance with the actual proceedings of God in ordinary life. In the same way we might expect that the prophet would rather pray for the conversion than the punishment of the enemies of the church ; but, in pro-

portion as the punishment of sinners is the act of God in ordinary life, rather than their conversion, in the same proportion is the prophet justified in praying for their punishment rather than for their conversion. We are too fond of thinking of God as a merely merciful Being, without reflecting that the common proceedings of the world ought to teach us better, and to show to us that His justice often manifests a stern and severe method of acting, and justifies the prayer that in such cases this stern administration may take effect. In short, if to punish be righteous, to pray for the punishment is righteous also.

No wonder, then, that this practice is sanctioned by the general voice of nature; and that it is so, is plain from the imprecations denounced on the vicious by the pagans. Thus Cicero bursts forth in the following vehement terms against Piso, in addressing that monster :* “ What gives me the greatest pleasure and satisfaction is, that the senate think of you as they do of their most inveterate enemies; that you are hated by the Roman knights, and by the whole state; that there is not a worthy man, not a single citizen, whose eyes

* Cic. in Pison. 20.

do not shun you, whose ears are not offended with the very mention of your name, whose soul does not abhor you. This is what I have always wished might befall you, *and what I have always prayed for.*" And just previously he had not been afraid to say that he had often imprecated evils on the enemies of the state, and that the gods had heard him.*

So Demosthenes† pours forth the following prayer in the highest tone of virtuous indignation:—"Hear me, ye immortal gods! and let not these their desires be ratified in heaven! Infuse a better spirit into these men! Inspire even their minds with purer sentiments! This is my first prayer. Or, *if their natures are not to be reformed*, on them, on them only, discharge your vengeance! Pursue them both by land and sea! pursue them even to destruction." Here we must observe the orator puts the very supposition we have spoken of in Section VIII. respecting Pharaoh,—the incorrigible state of those who are devoted to ruin.

It would be needless to add similar expressions from other classical writers; and it seems as needless to observe how particularly severe are the curses said to be denounced on their

* Cic. in Pison. 19. † Dem. de Coron. in fin.

enemies by those who are most led by the dictates of nature, namely, by barbarians.

Then, again, mankind invoke the aid of their friends or neighbours to crush their malevolent enemies, whether private or public : they invoke the assistance of the laws to enable them to punish criminals for offences which, if proved, are attended with forfeiture of life ; and (as we have seen in the last Section) they exult in the destruction of incorrigible offenders against their rights and liberties.

We make out, therefore, I conceive, a strong case in justification of the imprecations which are found in Scripture. They are in strict analogy with the course of nature, and with the practice of mankind.

There is, indeed, an extension of these imprecations of the Psalmist beyond the immediate subjects of them : I mean, to their wives, their children, and their posterity. But if the foregoing remarks have been satisfactory, there is but little cause for objection in the extension of the maledictions. For—not to speak of the fact of the whole inhabitants of cities being often put to the sword by indignant conquerors, or of the multiplied ill effects of the ruin of

individual criminals on the fortune and rank of their connexions—it is sufficient to state, that this may be at once referred to the class of objections mentioned in Section X.

SECTION XXIII.

JER. xvii. 9.—“ *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*”

PSALM lviii. 3.—“ *The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.* Also li. 5.

ROM. v. 12.—“ *By one man sin entered into the world.*”

THE view of human nature, as supported by these and similar passages,—that is, its proneness to evil,—has been much opposed. The practical question, however, is, not whether it is in concurrence with our ideas, but whether it agrees with the state of things around us.

Now, that our tendencies are to evil, is a fact which may be established not only by our own experience, but by that of ancient writers, who have not scrupled to lay bare the deformity of our nature.

“ There is something,” says Cicero,* “ in

* Cic. Tusc. Q. ii. 21.

the minds of men, by nature low, abject, and humble; in a manner enervated, languid, and infirm." And again:* "As soon as we are born, and receive the care of our parents, we move among (or we engage in) all kinds of depravity, so that we seem to imbibe (suck in) error almost with our nurse's milk." "We shall scarcely be able," says Isocrates,† "even with all this care, to overcome the sins of our nature." Thus Horace:‡ "No one is born without vices; he is the best who is encumbered with the least." And, in characterizing the young man, he says that he "is of the nature of wax, easily admitting of vicious inclination."§ Propertius observes,|| "Nature has given man his vice." And Terence,¶ "The mind is naturally averse to labour, and strongly bent on pleasure." And still more to the purpose another ancient writer, "Men are more inclined to pleasure than to virtue."***

Our natural propensities to evil are proved also by the many sentiments in the ancient writers, expressive of the baseness of man in

* Cic. Tusc. Q. iii. 2. † Isocr. ad Demonic. in fin.

‡ Hor. Sat. i. 3, 68. § Id. Art. Poet. 163.

|| Prop. ii. 22, 17. ¶ Ter. Andr. i. 1, 50, Patrick.

** See Lat. Delect. p. 22.

almost every respect. Thus numerous passages might be cited from them, in which they condemn the general discontent of man, his habit of magnifying his neighbour's blemishes, and excusing his own vices; of estimating friendships by the advantages they confer, and of turning his back on his friends when in distress; his love of being flattered, and his hatred of being reproved by his friends; and his wretched slavery to money and its pernicious influence on his actions. These are traits of general, indeed of universal character, which are given us by our own fellow-creatures, who viewed man with a scrutinizing eye, and boldly held him up to censure and contempt.

And does not this exposure by the ancients, of the viciousness of mankind, and their confessions* of the prevalence of crime among the majority of the species, go far to prove our tendency to it? For why should mankind be so vicious as it is, unless it had a disposition to vice? Were we naturally prone to love virtue, and to hate vice, we should surely witness a very different state of things from that which in fact obtains.

Then the evil tendency of our nature is

* See the section on Matt. vii. 13.

manifested by the contagion of bad example. Others have spoken of its extensive influence; Juvenal is very explicit :*

“ 'Twas loose example gave the stain, and will
With bane contagious spread it wider still;
As one scabb'd beast spreads mischief through the
plain,
And grape contracts from grape the livid stain.”

Then why the necessity expressed by writers of every age for moral culture, parental care, and strict discipline for the young, but that it requires immense exertion to stem the propensities of our nature, and to check its inclination to evil?

And why so much praise lavished by both ancients and moderns on any bright examples of virtue, but that our admiration is excited by the view of a human being who has been able to rise above his fellow-creatures, and to restrain the general inclination to vice?

Now the Scripture account is, that this tendency to evil flowed from the defection in Paradise. It may be said, indeed, that it is a great impeachment of the moral character of God, that He should have suffered such a universal stain to have corrupted the human race,

* Juv. Sat. ii. 64. Owen. (=78).

in punishment for the crimes of our first parents. But the law of nature, by which we suffer for the faults of others, is considered at large in other sections of this work ; and as to the fact of the universal tendency to evil, however we may conceive either supposition to labour under its peculiar difficulties, we choose, without doubt, the easier of the two suppositions, when we maintain that man was first formed upright, but fell from his state of innocence, rather than that he came at once from the hands of his Creator the frail and peccable creature which he now appears.

SECTION XXIV.

EZEK. iii. 18 ; and xxxiii. 8.—“ *When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die ; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life ; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand.*”

WHY, it is asked, should the wicked man die in his iniquity, as he was not warned ? and the more, as these words, and those which follow these verses, express a probability that he might have been saved, had he been warned ?

This is doubtless a subject worthy of serious attention, although it does not contain, I think, so much real difficulty as at first appears.

Surely it is common to hear it remarked by criminals under sentence of death, that they attribute their unhappy situation to the manner in which they were brought up by their parents, to the neglect of their moral and religious instruction in early years, and to the absence

of those suggestions and admonitions which might have been the instruments of their preservation from guilt. It seems a very hard case that men should thus suffer for the faults of their parents, and that too when the sons of other parents have received good advice and instruction, and have thereby been kept from ruin. But still things are as [they are; and we find by experience that things go on in their course, how much soever we inveigh against them: for, after all our objections, the question which was asked by Cicero,* may be asked as truly now: "Who does not see that children form their manners from their parents?"

Thus also some boys receive more, and others less, attention and admonition from their teachers; servants from their masters; shop-boys and others from their employers; the laity from their spiritual pastors. And, in a still more extensive way, the subjects of a nation are usually in a better or in a worse state, according to the example set them by their rulers. So that Cicero hath well observed,† that "it is easy to perceive, if you wish to trace the annals of past ages, that the state

* Cic. de Divin. 142, a. † Cic. de Legg. iii. 29.

and the people have always been such as the great men were; and that whatever changes have taken place in the morals of the great, the same will also follow in the people."

It must, however, be observed, that, although Providence has made great differences between different individuals and people in this respect,—as He has done in many other respects, as in those of happiness, wealth, health, and power,—yet in the midst of the deepest ignorance, as among the pagans, whose advantages are so much less than those of Christians, there may be still left enough of the natural light of conscience to warn and to direct. We are responsible only for what we have, and not for what we have not; but small is the number of criminals who do not confess that, however it has happened, they have had great cause for self-accusation. It appears that they are condemned in their own consciences, which testify that God "had given them space (and ability) to repent, but that they repented not."* And it is certain that nothing will ever overthrow the righteousness of punishment, as acknowledged by the confessions of men who are themselves suffering punishment; they speak much

* Rev. ii. 21.

more truly than our theoretical suppositions, and vindicate, with a strength which cannot be resisted, the government of the Divine Being, whether viewed in the course of nature, or in the book of Scripture.

SECTION XXV.

EZEK. xviii. 31.—“ *Cast away from you all your transgressions; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?*”

How much more worthy the Divine Being, it is said, if, instead of expostulating with sinners, He had at once turned their hearts, and made them avoid death?

This might be a natural thought, had it been entertained by one who had just risen, as Cicero represents a case, from a dark and deep abyss, where he had always lived, and had known nothing of what was passing above. But that it should be entertained by any who had seen the administration of the world, and had mixed among human affairs, is indeed surprising. Theory is ill arrayed against experience, when it can indulge in such visionary speculations, and suppose that its puny thoughts can compete with the sovereign wisdom of God. It may seem to itself wise; but its pantings after

wisdom, its aspirations after the discovery of truth, must end in disappointment.

There is a voice which speaks to us in the heart, whose sounds are acknowledged by all, for they are obeyed by the good, and feared by the bad. Its importunities may be soothed and lulled by artifice; they may be drowned or quenched for a time by violence or audacity; yet it rises the higher by depression, and throws its alarms and accusations with the greater force into the heart, the more it has been unheeded and despised. This voice is the voice of conscience, which Cicero* calls a heavy weight, Lucan† and Juvenal,‡ a witness in the breast, Menander, a God to mortals.§ A bad conscience, or consciousness of guilt, is compared by Plutarch|| to an ulcer in the body; and Pythagoras¶ declared that there was no bad man so bold as not to be reduced to the utmost timidity by it: that his mind has no rest, but is alarmed even at every wind. Seneca** observes, that bad deeds are punished by the whips of conscience, whose power of torment is great and perpetual. And Cicero

* Cic. iii. de Nat. D.

† Lucan, lib. 7.

‡ Juv. Sat. xiii.

§ Menand. Frag.

|| Plut. de Anim. Tranquill.

¶ Stobæus, Serm. 24.

** Sen. Ep. 97, ad Lucill.

remarks,* “ Every man’s own wicked fraud and consequent terror are his chief tormentors; every man’s own iniquity harasses and drives him to madness : his own wicked thoughts and remorse of conscience terrify him.” But perhaps no writer has more vividly described the power of this inward monitor than Juvenal, whom I cannot forbear to adduce at large in attestation of the sentiments of uninstructed reason.†

“ But does the wretch, whom human laws release,
 ‘Scape heaven’s high wrath, and pass his days in peace?
 No—conscience, fell avenger, ever wakes ;
 With horror fills th’ astonished soul, and shakes
 A scorpion whip unseen by human eyes,
 Tortures the villain, and all rest denies.”

And a few verses after :—

“ The wretch that but conceives a crime in thought,
 Contracts the guilt e’en of an actual fault.
 Then what shall he expect who still proceeds
 To perfect sin, and work up thoughts to deeds ?
 Why, ceaseless anguish preys upon his heart ;
 His very food no pleasure can impart.
 Such are the men who start with wild surprise,
 When heaven’s dread lightning flashes in their eyes :
 They think each glance is levelled at their head :
 Heaven’s first low murmurs shake their soul with
 dread.

* Cic. pro Rosc. Amer. 24. † Juv. xiii. 192. Owen.

Or, if some pleurisy invades their frame,
Allows no rest, and wraps them in a flame,
They think this ill heaven-sent : Behold, they cry,
The visitations of an angry sky.

Various th' emotions which the bad attend ;

They're resolute and bold when they offend.

But when the deed is done, they then begin

To see the foul enormity of sin :

They curse the guilty hour when they resign'd

The comfort of the self-approving mind."

We have not, however, only the admonitions of conscience ; we have admonitions conveyed to us by the unhappy experience of others, by the suggestions of our friends, and by the instruction of the wise ; we have

" Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything."

Yet we find by experience that these natural expostulations frequently fail of producing their legitimate influence. They warn and terrify the sinner ; yet the sinner is unreformed. But do we throw blame on the providence of God, because these His expostulations are not successful, and because we presume to think it would have been a greater proof of wisdom to have reclaimed at once, than to have warned and exhorted ? Do we therefore reject His government, and trample on His authority ?

If we shudder at so doing, let us equally shudder at abandoning the obligations of Scripture, only because it follows the plans and methods of Providence, whose wisdom and power we dare not deny.

I have somewhere met with a few admirable lines on the unregarded admonitions of conscience, which are so much to the purpose, that I must not conclude this section without citing them :—

“ 'Tis said, th' offending man will sometimes sigh,
And say, ' My God, in what a dream am I ?
I will awake.' But as the day proceeds,
The weaken'd mind the day's indulgence needs.
Hating himself at ev'ry step he takes,
His mind approves the virtue he forsakes :
And yet forsakes her. O ! how sharp the pain,
Our vice, ourselves, our habits to disdain !
To go where nevet yet in peace we went ;
To feel our hearts can bleed. yet not relent ;
To sigh, yet not recede ; to grieve, yet not repent ! ”

Nor can I omit the following remarks of the Rev. Mr. Seed :—“ The passions hurry us into action, and plunge us into folly, before reason puts in its remonstrances. And what is the consequence ? That very reason acts the part of an after-wise friend, who, though he does not restrain us from doing wrong, yet, as soon as the action is done, upbraids us with pungent reflections, and tells us we are fools.”

SECTION XXVI.

MATT. v. 21. “ *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say unto you, that, whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment.*” So verses 27, 28; 33, 34; 38, 39; 43, 44.

HEB. viii. 7.—“ *If that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.*”

It is said, “God is unchangeable. How then is it consistent that He should make laws at one time, and supersede them at another?”

We have already considered in Section XVI. a point which may be classed among the objected passages now brought before the reader. But it may be necessary to introduce here somewhat of a supplement to the remarks there made.

Certain laws are adapted to certain people and to certain times ; and perhaps no laws will suit all people and all times. Not that the laws in this case are bad in themselves, but they are bad relatively, and as compared with the circumstances of the age. Thus it happens that laws, which are positively good at one time, are in practice positively bad at another, and deserving, therefore, of censure, if practically applied.

Again: the same laws will not be suitable to a jail and to a city ; to cannibals and enlightened people ; to slaves and to freemen ; to children and to men. They must be modified according to the circumstances.

What do all the new acts of senates, all the new decrees of princes, which are constantly changing and modifying those which were passed before them, manifest, but the same truth ? They relax or mitigate punishments for the same offences ; they declare that to be a vice at one time, which at another they declare innocent ; and they explode the most deeply-rooted opinions and practices. Nor is it to be forgotten that all this is taking place under the government of one and the same Divine Being, who yet suffers this change, this

alteration, to be continually in operation in the kingdoms of the world. The voice of the people, that is, of the state, has been well called the voice of God; yet how changeable is this voice! Is it wonderful, therefore, if God, in his more immediate dealings with mankind, should change and modify His directions and commandments according to the circumstances? Thus our Lord tells the Jews, that "Moses, because of the hardness of their hearts, suffered them to put away their wives; but from the beginning it was not so."* Thus, were a physician to diet a person who had taken a very immoderate quantity of strong drink for many years, until it had grown into a habit,—it would be very injudicious treatment to cut off at once the whole cause of offence, and not allow him to lessen the quantity by gradual reductions.

"The strength of sin," says St. Paul,† "is the law:" that is, it is the law which makes sin to be what it is. We may well, then, leave to the Divine Being to determine when He shall make or unmake the law of sin; and when He shall introduce such changes in it, as suit the nature of beings, not perfect and unchange-

* Matt xix. 8.

† 1 Cor. xv. 56.

able like Himself; ever remembering that that only is offensive to Him which He has interdicted. All the trees in paradise were freely and innocently to be touched and tasted, but that one only which He had expressly forbidden, and that because He had forbidden it.

SECTION XXVII.

MATT. v. 28. “ *Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*”

This has been thought severe morality; but there is no foundation for this opinion. I will not ask what we should think, for instance, of a servant who lusted after our money, our plate, our wife. Nor will I point the reader's attention to sermons and essays of christian divines,* where the doctrine before us is vindicated and maintained; because these may be thought more or less interested in the subject; but I will support it by the opinions of pagan writers, who show the law of God written on the heart, and utter the dictates of natural ethics.

And first as to the express point in question:

“ The vestal,” says Seneca,† “ who desires to

* Yet I must observe that Dr. Paley in his *Evidences* has admirably illustrated the passage.

† Sen. vi. Excerpt. Controv.

commit fornication, is incestuous, even though she commit it not."

But the principle of the doctrine is of general application, and consequently we find it insisted on by the ancients in a variety of divergent points.

"A man may be guilty," says Seneca,* "though he has committed no crime. As far as blame attaches, sin is committed even before the act: a robber is a robber before he stains his hands with blood."

"Not he alone is wicked, in my judgment," says Ælian,† "who has done an injury, but even the person who intends it." And so Stobæus,‡ "He is not a good man who does no injury, but who does not wish to do one."

"You will in vain hide from God," says Sextus the Pythagorean,§ "not only in acting unjustly, but even in thinking unjustly."

Cicero thus points out to the Romans the necessity of choosing a general who can command his very eyes and thoughts:|| "Supposing, therefore, you should have a general who may appear capable of defeating the forces

* Sen. de Const. vii. Benef. v. 14. † Æl. xiv. 28.

‡ Stob. Sermon. ix. § Sext Pyth. Sentent.

|| Cic. pro Leg. Manil. 23. Dunc.

of these two powerful kings in a pitched battle, yet, unless he is also one that can restrain his hands, *eyes, and thoughts*, from the riches of our allies, from their *wives* and children, from the ornaments of their cities and temples, and from the gold and treasure of their palaces, he is by no means fit to command in an Asiatic war."

"Possibly you may imagine," says Cicero* again, "this man ought not to be punished, because his design did not succeed; as if the success of a crime, and not the intention of the criminal, was cognizable by the laws. There was less reason indeed for grief, as the attempt did not succeed; but certainly not at all the less for punishment." Again:† "A good man will not only not dare to do, but he will not even dare to think what he cannot speak of in public." Once more:‡ "The very making a question of a thing which is bad is criminal, though one should not proceed so far as the execution of it."

There is an anecdote related of Glaucus to this purpose by Herodotus,§ and it is em-

* Cic. in Orat. pro Milon. Duncan. † Cic. Off. iii. 19.

‡ Cic. Off. iii. 8.

§ Herod. vi. 86.

ployed by Juvenal, whose words are to this effect :*—

“ The Spartan rogue, who, boldly bent on fraud,
Dar’d ask the god to sanction and applaud,
And sought for counsel at the Pythian shrine,
Receiv’d for answer from the lips divine:
‘ That he who doubted to restore his trust,
And reason’d much, reluctant to be just,
Should for those doubts and that reluctance prove
The deepest vengeance of the powers above.’
The tale declares, that not pronounced in vain
Came forth the warning from the sacred fane.
Ere long no branch of that devoted race
Could mortal man on soil of Sparta trace.
Thus but intended mischief, stay’d in time,
Has all the moral guilt of finish’d crime.”

Josephus indeed wonders how Polybius could say that Antiochus Epiphanes perished, because he had purposed to plunder the temple of Diana in Persia; for to intend a thing, he says, and not perform it, is not worthy of punishment. And some moderns, too, may wonder at the same; but we have seen enough to convince us that the natural light of reason is on the side of the declaration of Scripture, and amply confirms its truth.

* Juv. Sat. xiii. Badham.

SECTION XXVIII.

MATT. v. 39.—“ *Resist not evil : but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee ; and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.*” 44.—“ *Love your enemies ; bless them that curse you.*”

LUKE iii. 11.—“ *John saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none ; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.*” xiv. 12.—“ *When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not* thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours, lest they also*

* That is, call not *only* thy friends, &c. The learned reader knows this to be a very common mode of speaking in the language of the New Testament. See Bos. (Ellipses,) and Whitby on this passage.

bid thee, and a recompense be made thee. But, when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind : and thou shalt be blessed, for they cannot recompense thee, but thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."

THESE and similar passages have been much censured, as commanding things utterly impracticable, and exhorting to a height of morality utterly unattainable. And certainly it must be confessed that the practice of the thoughtless world is but little agreeable to these admonitions. But it must be observed that we have elsewhere proved, even from heathen writers, the great prevalence of vice above virtue in the world ; and that, if we will be persuaded that that morality only is to be the object of our pursuit which has the conduct of the majority of mankind for its sanction, we must be content with very humble attainments indeed in virtue. We must observe, too, that religion is a high and sublime principle of action ; making us dissatisfied with our best efforts and with our most successful advances,—causing us to “ forget the things which are behind, and to press forward towards those which are

before us, not as if we had already attained, or were already perfect ;” but exciting us to go on unto perfection,—to think “nothing done, while anything remains to be done;”—and even calling us to delight and rejoice in obstacles and in hardships, in sacrifices and in humiliations. And here let me quote the words of an excellent writer,* who, in speaking of some of the passages under our notice, well observes :—
“These are extreme lengths of submission ; but the severity of the rule teaches us how few limits can be put to obedience, and how wisely our Saviour has provided against any line which our presumption might be apt to set to exertion and perfectibility.” Indeed, our Lord takes this ground from our feet, by directing us to imitate the pattern of all perfection :
“Be ye perfect, even as your Father is perfect.”
But then we must observe, to use the words of a late eloquent divine,† that “when we consider the exalted rewards by which God allures us to obedience, we cannot but allow that the highest attainments may justly be expected of us. Nor is it reasonable that the eternal glories of the redeemed should be the fruit of

* Gilly’s Spirit of the Gospel, p. 25.

† Southgate’s Sermons.

their indolence, and not the effects of such victories over the world as prepare them for receiving the crown of life. The promises of the Gospel, were they made to the slothful, would be without the proper stamp and authenticity of their divine Author."

But we must leave these preliminary remarks, and observe, that what has been done, may be done again: and that what has been done by mortals like ourselves, may be done by ourselves. And if we can prove that morality, similar to that recommended by Scripture, was recommended by pagans, then Scripture will be justified by *the analogy of reason*; and it must be allowed that it insists, not on crudities and impossibilities, but on what is really sound and practicable.

The first sentences are recommendations to abstain from returning injury. Such a spirit is shown by our not being exasperated at provocation; but rather by our being ready, if necessary, to allow a further injury to be done to our persons and property, than to resent what has been done, and to break out into retaliation, giving hurt for hurt, and blow for blow, thus suffering the offender to be put on the defensive. So how much better to bear insult patiently, and to

suffer abuse upon abuse, than to resort to re-
crimination, giving word for word, and thus
putting ourselves in the wrong. It is certain
that a second blow, or a second abuse, would
often be averted by patiently enduring the first;
or, instead of returning it, by calmly and mildly
asking the reason for the first, as Christ him-
self acted. (John xviii. 22, 23.) "Each reta-
liation," says a late annotator,* "must render
enmities eternal; being a fresh injury, it would
require fresh satisfaction, and thus no period
could be assigned to the reciprocation of af-
fronts. But to suffer injuries for the sake of
peace, when no duty requires the contrary,
would, if this disposition were universal, render
the christian world a happy society of friends."
To produce, however, this most desirable re-
sult, the grand desideratum is *the conquest over
self*, a virtue which is highly eulogized even
by the Roman writers.

Nor is the prohibition of retaliation uncon-
firmed by the authority of the pagan world.
"Some of the heathen philosophers," says Mr.
Elsley,† "perceived the folly and weakness of
revenge. Thus Plato (in Criton.) says, 'Nor

* The Rev. E. Valpy on Matt. v. 39.

† Annot. on the Gospels, vol. i. p. 110.

is it proper, when injured, to injure in return.' On this sentiment Maximus Tyrius has a dissertation tending to support and confirm it. Add Hierocles, Menander, Jamblichus the Pythagorean, Metellus Numidicus, Seneca, Musonius, Lysias, and Zeno. See the quotations from them in Grotius." But I must cite at full the words of Seneca:—"To repay benefits is honourable, but not injuries. In the former case it is disgraceful to be outdone, in the latter to outdo. Revenge is a term of inhumanity, although through bad habit it has obtained the character of justice. How delightful to be invulnerable, to be affected by no injuries, by no insults! Revenge is an open confession of annoyance. A certain person unwittingly (for who would have done it knowingly?) struck Cato the younger on the mouth whilst in the bath. On his apologizing, Cato replied, 'I do not remember that you struck me.' He was not irritated; he did not revenge the injury. He thought it better not to appear conscious of it, than to revenge it. You will say, Did no evil arise from the unpunished insolence of the man? Nay, much good. He began to know the character of Cato, and to

* Sen. de Irâ, ii. 32; iii. 5.

admire him." And of Musonius :* " It is the part of the brute species, not of mankind, to seek how to return bite for bite, evil for evil." And thus Simplicius on Epictetus :† " On any provoking occasions, there is no preservation against immoderate resentments like silence, and refusing to give one's passion vent: and though it may boil and foam within, yet still to stifle the fire, until we feel its heat abate, and not to let loose the dog until he have done snarling. And the practice is recommended to us particularly by the example of Socrates, who was taken notice of for never speaking a word when anything angered him." And Plato represents Socrates, in reply to Crito, as observing that " we ought not to return an injury, or to retaliate, or to do any mischief or evil to any creature in the world, whatever we may have suffered from him." So Nepos‡ records of Atticus, that " when he received an injury, he wished rather to forget it than to punish it." And thus Plutarch writes :§ " He is noble and has a great mind, who, like the larger animals, hears with indifference the barking of the cur. To disregard insult is frequently better than to

* Stob. Serm. 19.

† Ch. 27, 28. Stanhope.

§ Nep. Att. 11.

|| Plut. Apophth.

revenge it." But, as a general remark, I cannot forbear adding the testimony of Juvenal,* that "revenge is ever the satisfaction of a weak and little mind."

But it seems to be going a step further to say, that we are to love our enemies, and even to bless them. Our Lord, who "knew what was in man," knew that it was an easy thing to love those who love us and do good to us: but that the difficulty lay in loving those who do us wrong. To this point, then, he calls our particular attention, and would have us cultivate this grace, as being of rare growth, and requiring a high state of advance in virtue. And in this he was supported by the Cynic philosopher, who declared† it as "proper that himself should be beaten with rods, and that, while beaten, he should *love* those who beat him, as if he were the father or the brother of all men." And Epictetus observes,‡ that if another does us an injury, we ought, on our part, to bless him in return. It is observable that our Lord tells his disciples to imitate, in their conduct to those who injured them, the example of

* Juv. Sat. xiii. 189.

† Arrian, Dissert. iii. 22. p. 348.

‡ Arrian, i. 25.

God, who maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good. And in the very same manner Seneca* directs us: "If thou wouldst imitate the gods, be kind to the ungrateful: for the sun rises even on the wicked." And Antoninus:† "The gods take every care of wicked men: shalt thou, being thyself one of these poor mortals, be weary of bearing with them?"

Then Christ recommends that we should suffer injuries of a slight nature, rather than have recourse to the law to punish the injurious. And this recommendation is fully borne out by the remarks of Cicero:‡ "As it is a duty to be generous in giving, so is it not to be too rigorous in demanding; but in every transaction of buying, selling, letting, and hiring, to behave ourselves towards our neighbours and chapmen with all the fairness and courtesy imaginable: *to let go something of our strict and just rights on certain occasions; to avoid all suits and contentions at law, as far as can reasonably and fairly be expected; perhaps I might add, and even something further; for in several cases to deliver up one's right is not only generous, but advantageous too.*"

* Sen. de Benef. v. 25. † Whitby on Matt. v. 45.

Cic. Off. ii. 18. Cockm.

We are commanded also to give and to lend to those who ask us. And here how many Christians may be put to shame by the noble conduct of the excellent Cimon, as represented by Nepos? * “He was always accompanied by attendants, who carried money with them; and this he did to enable him to give immediate assistance to any who should require it, without being obliged to put them off to another time.” The French commentator here cites as parallels to the last words those of Publius Syrus—“He gives a benefit twice who gives it quickly.” And of Ausonius: “Ungrateful is the favour which is slowly given.” So our Lord’s precept supposes a quickness of purpose and readiness of despatch. Of Pisistratus also it is recorded, † that he was usually accompanied by two or more boys, whose business it was to give small money to those who were in want of it. Nor was the command to lend new to the Jews; for Moses had given them the same direction: “If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates, thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother; but thou shalt open thy hand wide unto him, and shalt surely *lend*

* Nep. Cim. 4. † Plut. in Solon.; and Ælian. ix. 25.

him sufficient for his need in that which he wanteth.”* Of these loans, however, our Lord would have us but little careful whether we have the return hereafter: “Lend, hoping for nothing again;” — “for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.”† So that the command to lend resolves itself almost entirely into that of giving.

Then as to the command, “He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise;” here also we find that Christians are put to shame by a pagan who acted on principles which the Baptist recommends, but which our selfish tempers feel it difficult to approve. For Cornelius Nepos‡ informs us that Cimon, the Athenian, on seeing any person who had been reduced in his circumstances badly clothed, often gave him his own garment.

And, as to the precept of our Lord respecting the entertainment of guests, we ought not to be surprised at it, when we find that Nepos records of Cimon, that he daily had his table so furnished as to enable him to invite

* Deut. xv. 7.

† Luke vi. 34, 35.

‡ Nep. Cim. 4.

§ Id. ib.

to dinner any whom he met in the forum uninvited: and this he never neglected to do." And of Atticus,* that "he was in the habit of liberally inviting to his house men of all ranks of society." But Cicero† puts the general duty of benevolence on the very same grounds as our Lord puts this particular one: "Our principal duty, both in doing kindnesses and in making requitals, is to do most for those who stand in greater need of it, supposing all circumstances else to be equal. The contrary to which appears plainly in the practice and actions of the greater part of men: *for people choose to bestow their favours on those from whom they expect to receive the most benefits, though the persons perhaps do not at all stand in need of them.*" And so Pliny: ‡ "My opinion is, that a man who would be truly bountiful ought to exert his liberality towards his country, his neighbours, his relations, his friends: and let me say, *by way of distinction, his friends in the greatest indigence*: not like those persons who choose to apply their gifts *only where they see a probability of finding a most ample return.* Such gifts are like baited

* Nep. Att. 13. † Cic. Off. i. 15. Cockm.

‡ Plin. Epist. ix. 30.

hooks: they are not meant to bestow your own property, but to catch the property of others." Such a precaution, says the Earl of Orrery, in his note on this passage, was necessary in an age where liberality was seldom directed by goodness of heart, but often skulked under the mask of craft. That age was, however, probably not a peculiar one; for man is much the same in every age; and we certainly in this age are fond in general of giving where we hope to have the largest return. I must add, that we may receive instruction even from the benighted Arabs. For "we are told by travellers that the Arabs, when they kill a sheep, dress it all, and often call in their neighbours and the poor, and finish everything; and that an Arab prince will often dine in the street before his door, and call to all that pass, even beggars, in the usual expression of Bismillah, —i. e. in the name of God,—who come and sit down, and then retire with the usual form of returning thanks."*

I shall close this section by a few remarks on a passage which has given much ground of offence, and is connected with the strictness of the precepts we have now been consi-

* Note on Luke xiv. 12. by the Rev. E. Valpy.

dering. It is that of Matt. xii. 36 : " Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."

The learned Raphel says on this passage : " St. Chrysostom interprets the word which we translate *idle*, ' that which does not suit the point in hand, and which confers no utility, which is false, and which is calumnious.' He adds, ' Some say it is vain, exciting immodest laughter, or base, and unchaste, and low.' Herodotus (c. iii. p. 236) uses a *vain word* for an *injurious word*. And there is no doubt that Christ refers to blasphemy, of which he speaks in verse 32. But I do not in the meanwhile object to understanding the word to mean *frivolous*, so that Christ argues by comparison. If the person who speaks an idle word will be punished, how much more he who speaks a blasphemous one ! Cicero, however, often uses the word *useless* to express *hurtful*, *pernicious*. Off. iii. 13. Invent. p. 143. B and D. Ib. l. ii. c. 52." Thus also in his Offices, ii. 14, Cicero calls Norbanus " a seditious and *useless* citizen."

We may deduce from these remarks the opinions of the ancients as to vain words and useless men. And if pagans could attach such

blame to them, shall we think it strange that Christians should be taught to do the same? They were not bound to such circumspection and seriousness as we are; but *we* should consider ourselves as soldiers in an enemy's country, and as having every occasion for our armour and our weapons being bright and fit for use. We ought not to be frivolous and vain when such mighty interests are at stake, and when an accident may bring us before our God, to give that account which is to determine our condition for ever. If one idle and frivolous word may be allowed, then may a second and a third; and at length life will be passed in frivolity and folly. How flat and insipid to a sensible man is the idle prattle of a trifler! and is it not fit it should appear so to the Christian?

The idle words censured by our Lord correspond to "the foolish talking and jesting" which are judged to be "not convenient" by St. Paul.* And even Epictetus† would teach us that "it will little become us to render ourselves the common buffoon, and to be always trying to make the company laugh; for that this is exceedingly apt to degenerate into

* Eph. v. 4. † Epict. Enchirid. 53. Stanhope.

folly ; and that he who only studies men's diversion, shall be sure at the same time to lose their respect." But perhaps the wisdom of the words of Christ will best appear by citing the following passage from the Abstract of Seneca's *Morals*, as written by Sir R. L'Estrange :*

" There are a sort of people, that are men of business, but it is only in their faces ; for they wander up and down without any design, like pismires, eager and empty ; and everything they do is only as it happens. This is a humour which a man may call a kind of restless laziness. Others you shall have, that are perpetually in haste, as if they were crying fire ; and all this hurry, perhaps, only to salute somebody that had no mind to take notice of them, or some such trivial errand. At night, when they come home weary, ask them what they have done, and where they have been ? It is a very slender account they are able to give you ; and yet the next day they take the same jaunt over again. This is a kind of fantastical industry, a great deal of pains taken to no purpose. Twenty visits made, and nobody at home : they themselves least of all. They that have this vice are commonly hearkeners, tale-bearers, meddlers

* Edit. 1762, p. 309.

in other people's affairs. These men of idle employment, that run up and down, eternally vexing others, that thrust themselves into all companies, what do they get by it? One man's asleep; another's at supper; a third in company; a fourth in haste; a fifth gives them the slip; and, when their folly has gone the round, they close up the day with shame and repentance. Whereas Zeno, Pythagoras, Democritus, Aristotle, Theophrastus, and all the patrons of philosophy and virtue, they are always at leisure and in good humour, familiar, profitable. A man never comes away empty-handed from them, but full of comfort and satisfaction. In their conversation there is neither danger, treachery, nor expense; but we are the wiser, the happier, and the richer for it. How blessedly does a man spend his time in this company! There is counsel without reproach, and praise without flattery. We cannot be the choosers of our parents, but of our friends we may, and adopt ourselves into these noble families. This is the way to make mortality immortal: the time past we make our own by remembrance, the present by use, the future by foresight. But it is not sufficient to know what Plato or Zeno said, unless we make it all our own by

habit and practice, and improve both the world and ourselves by an example of life answerable to their precepts.”

But I must encroach a little further on the reader's patience, while I extract the sentiments of another ancient writer on the general waste of time; only observing, that if the love of science could call forth so much regret at the waste of time, the love of a more sacred and a more enduring study should naturally be allowed to call it forth yet more powerfully. “It is owing to ourselves,” says Quintilian,* “that our time is so short; for what a small pittance of it do we allot to study! We employ some hours in paying empty compliments; others in seeing plays; others in public diversions; and others in eating and drinking; besides those that are thrown away in gaming and the extravagant care of our persons. All this renders the hours that remain unfit for study. But, were we to devote all our hours to learning, our life would be abundantly long; and we should have time more than enough for compassing all I require, even though we took the daytime only into our reckoning, and gave the night to sleep; but even then we might

* Quintil. lib. xii. cap. ii. Guthrie.

improve, for some nights are too long to be entirely consumed in sleeping. At present we reckon our life, but not our studies, by years."

Ye triflers and idlers, a pagan can give you as severe a sermon as Jesus or St. Paul. Cease, then, to censure the gospel for proposing a mode of life which has received the sanction of wise and excellent men who were strangers to its truth, and had no object in confirming it.

SECTION XXIX.

MATT. vii. 13, 14.—“ *Wide is the gate and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat : because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*”

THIS is doubtless a melancholy picture of the moral and religious condition of mankind ; but this would surely not be the first time, if we were to learn that there is much which is heart-rending in the state of humanity, whether we view it in its morals, or in its circumstances.

Nothing can resist the force of argument derived from fact ; and all theory must flee before what is the unchangeable course of nature. We may wish that many things in the constitution of the world were other than what they are ; but our wishes cannot subvert the order of the universe.

Were there no facts to establish the truth of the statement before us, then, indeed, we might complain that Scripture bore no resemblance

to external things. But what will be said, if we show that the statement complained of has been made by writers who knew nothing of Revelation?

One fact, which deserves peculiar attention, is, that perhaps no transgressors against morality transgress in all things. We forget this in the estimate of human depravity, and consequently do not observe so much crime as really exists around us. While the Roman poet, who read mankind with the greatest perspicacity, observed the general iniquity of man, he did not fail to observe it in this particular view :*

“ Take me a man, *at venture*, from the crowd,
And he’s ambitious, covetous, or proud.
One burns to madness for the wedded dame;
Intemperate lusts another’s breast inflame.
The silver vase with pleasure one admires,
While Albius o’er a bronze antique expires :
The venturous merchant, from the rising day,
To regions warm’d beneath the setting ray,
Like dust, collected by a whirlwind, flies
To save his pelf, or bid the mass arise.”

This is a piteous description of human na-

* Hor. Sat i. 4, 25. Francis.

ture, but it is far exceeded by Juvenal's description of his own times:*

“ Rare are the good : more scarce their number seems
Than Thebes' fam'd gates, or Nile's disparted
streams.

Worse than the iron is the present race :
Nature with our corruptions keeps no pace :
Her plastic skill can no vile metal frame,
That's base enough to give the age a name.”

The allusion here is to the metals descriptive of the four ages of man, which, though feigned by the poets to paint the vice of the world as increasing in horrible deformity, are no bad testimonies of the opinions of the heathen as to this matter. Horace complained of the increasing crimes of his own age, and predicted those of his posterity :†

“ What feels not time's consuming rage ?
More vicious than their father's age
Our sins begot the present race,
Of manners impious, bold and base :
And yet, with crimes to us unknown,
Our sons shall mark the coming age their own.”

Homer also has given the same description

* Juv. Sat. xiii. 26. Owen.

† Horace, Ode iii. 6. 45. Francis.

of his generation, as compared with that of his predecessors :

. . . “ Few sons attain the praise
Of their great sires, and most their sires disgrace.”*

Or to give a closer version in prose :—
“ Few sons are like the father : the majority
are worse, few are better than the father.” So
Euripides :†

“ ’Tis rare to find,
’Mong many, one who by ignoble deeds
Shames not the virtues of his ancestors.”

Many other examples of this kind might be
adduced. I must cite, however, two general re-
marks from the ancient writers : one on the
subject of adherence to friends, and one on that
to princes. Sophocles says :‡

. . . “ Little is the trust we can repose
In human friendships.”

And Accius remarks,§ that “ many are trea-

* Hom. Od. ii. 276. Pope.

† Eurip. Heraclid. 327. Potter.

‡ Soph. Aj. 670. Francklin.

§ Cited in Cic. Off. iii. 21.

cherous and unfaithful to kings, and but few are faithful." And Cicero puts the question on this passage : " Of what sort of kings did he speak this ? Was it not of those who had received the sceptre by lawful succession ?"

But I cannot suffer myself to pass by a very important observation made by one of those who had attained in ancient times the highest character for wisdom, and have consequently been styled the seven wise men : " The majority," says Bias, " are wicked."*

I ask, then, if Scripture be not supported by the confessions of men who were not interested in giving a testimony to its truth. I ask, if either the passage of St. Matthew at the head of this section, or those of Genesis vi. 12, 13, and Psalm xiv. 1—3, be not in strict correspondence with the actual state of mankind as described by them. If then there can be blame, it certainly rests not on Scripture, but on Providence.

But I must not conclude without remarking, that although the good form the minority in every age, yet at " the end of the days" there will be a large number of redeemed and glorified beings. For the apostle declares† that he " be-

* Diog. i. 82.

† Rev. vii. 9.

held, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."

SECTION XXX.

MATT. viii. 28.—“ *There met him two possessed with devils.*”

MARK xvi. 9.—“ *Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.*”

THESE and similar passages have been made the subject of much railery. But it does not necessarily follow that those who ridicule, either understand the subject which they ridicule, or are capable of giving a judgment if they do.

Some commentators have indeed taken on themselves to explain away all these difficulties, by employing the convenient assistance of tropes and figures. But I think this method would stamp falsehood on many passages of the gospels ; and certainly the objector has a right to keep us to the text.

We shall all, I should suppose, give a ready assent to the assertion made by our poet :

“ ’Tis but a part we see, and not a whole.”*

* Pope’s Essay on Man, i. 60.

And we also may admit, that “there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in the philosophy” even of the wisest. It is certain that many things exist which we do not see. We do not see the wind; “we know not whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth;” yet we know its existence from its sound. We see not the subtle fluid or miasma which insinuates itself into the pores of the body: yet its evidence is known by its destructive qualities. We have ample reason for believing that there are suns and planets in the universe which are totally beyond our ken. We are not able to see even our own spirits; we judge of their existence by our power of consciousness, memory, and reflection. And we are not able to see the Spirit of God, who governs the universe.

To quote the words of an ancient pagan author:* “Though the Deity is *invisible* to man, yet who, when he considers the wonderful rapidity with which the earth moves round its axis, and how constantly it performs its annual revolutions,—the fruits of the earth, the variety and regular changes of the seasons, by which they are brought to maturity, for the se-

* Cic. Nat. Deor. ii. 38.

curity and preservation of man,—will say that there is not a Divine Being, who rules, protects, and governs all things with infinite power and wisdom ?”

Now, as Paley well remarks,* “it is a step to have it proved, that there must be something in the world more than what we see.” It will show us our short-sightedness, and our inability to penetrate with our present senses the recesses of nature. It will strip us of our vanity, and force us to the conclusion that it is unreasonable to raise objections which originate perhaps only from our ignorance.

Mr. Jay argues well and in consonance with our principles of analogy :† “God employs the ministrations of angels. It is true that we cannot see them : but how many things do we admit as real, that are not visible ! How little is the babe aware of the fond attentions of her who bare him ; and how long is it before he can estimate his obligations to a mother’s vigilance ! She can afterwards inform him how she watched over him ; but he was not sensible of it at the time. And should he happen to be blind, how much would be done for him all

* Nat. Theol. Conclusion.

† Lee’s Sunday Lecturer, p. 71.

through life, which, though he would enjoy it in the effects, he would never see? If we had eyes adapted to the spiritual world, what striking scenes should we witness! But our blindness does not render them less true."

We may observe also that modern improvements in the microscope have brought us acquainted with myriads of animated inhabitants of a small portion of water, of which our forefathers had no knowledge. They have brought to our view, by means of magnifiers of surprising power, the internal mechanism of the smallest animals; they have enabled us

" To trace in Nature's most minute design
The signature and stamp of power divine :
Contrivance intricate expressed with ease,
Where unassisted sight no beauty sees :
The shapely limb and lubricated joint,
Within the small dimensions of a point."

And they have given us cause for believing that, were our instruments yet greater, we should have still more cause for wonder at the inward mysteries of things unseen by the natural eye. Who then shall pretend to say that there are no subtle and unseen in-

telligences, whether good or bad, fixing their abode in the inmost recesses of our breast; and that there may not be numerous evil spirits there, claiming with propriety the title of Legion,* and connected both with the vices of the mind and with the maladies of the body?

* Mark v. 9.

SECTION XXXI.

MATT. x. 34, 35.—“ *Think not that I am come to send peace on earth : I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance with his father, and the daughter against her mother . . . and a man's foes shall be those of his own household.*”

THIS is thought a startling assertion.

Our Lord may be supposed to mean as follows : “ I am come to oppose evil men and evil habits, and therefore I and my followers must expect opposition. I am come to oppose false opinions, false notions of religion, and false religions : and therefore opposition must arise. For falsehood will ever war against truth, and vice against virtue. And this is not true only as a public matter, but it will operate, as in public, so in private ; as in communities, so in families. But let all this go for little : this life is not your rest, nor your peace : here you will be beset with enemies even in

your households ; but in heaven will be your friends and your peace."

And is this an objectionable proposition? Must not the fact have been *à priori* expected? Who ever sets up to correct vice, to enlighten ignorance, to reform abuses, without incurring animosity, ill-will, and opposition? The course of nature runs in this manner, and it cannot be otherwise. Rooted prejudices and established interests concur against setting things on a new and improved basis. So that if there is truth in the objection as applying to Revelation, there is truth in it as applying to every attempt to ameliorate mankind: and there is an end to all such philanthropic endeavours.

Look at rebellions and civil wars,—such I mean in which it is admitted that the inhabitants are driven, by accumulated acts of injury, and injustice, and tyranny, to seek their deliverance. Here you will find an exact parallel to the case in the text. Here you will find the members of the same household arrayed against each other; delivering up and betraying each other; ay, and thinking it a righteous act so to do. We may complain of the barbarities committed in these wars; we may even dare to charge Providence "with folly" for allowing

such wars to ensanguine the fields, and to pull asunder the bonds of society: but these things go on, and will go on: and Christ is merely stating the order of nature, when he asserts, in bold and uncompromising language, the results of his own mission.

So much for attempts at innovating established opinions. And now take the world as it usually is, abstracted from such attempts. See the numberless divisions, quarrels, bickerings, controversies, disputes, distrusts, feuds, enmities, animosities, hostilities, duels, murders, in private life: and see also the seditions, the fights, the battles, the wars, the crusades, the slaughters, in public life, to such a degree that it might seem as if the proper inscription put upon the world would be, "A world not made for peace and union, but for war and discord." And that, as to practical effect, the Creator could justly have said, "Think not that I have made the world to produce peace: I produced it not for peace, but for the sword." So literal is the agreement, if we view the subject in its real bearings, between Nature and Revelation.

I will add, that I entirely agree with the acute Paley, when he observes, that startling

assertions (like that at the head of this section) tend rather to prove the truth of Scripture, as it could not be the object of impostors to disgust and alienate, but to allure and conciliate mankind.

SECTION XXXII.

MATT. xviii. 7.—*“It must needs be that offences come, but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh !”*

HERE is a hard saying, it is urged : Jesus declares that sin must, by the necessity of nature, be committed, and yet announces a woe to him who causes it.

But here is no other person than the Author of Nature expounding His own laws, the established laws of the world, the daily course of His own visible government. For look at our prisoners, criminals, and convicts,—look at our judges, our magistrates, our jailers, our executioners ;—look at our prisons, our penitentiaries, our houses of correction, our hulks, our penal settlements, our stocks, our chains, our gallows,—and say if the state of things before us do not precisely correspond to the representation of the declaration of Christ.

We might be disposed, perhaps, to think, *à priori*, that a God of all power and goodness could by no possibility make such a system, as that in it vice should be a necessary element; and still more, that punishment for vice should be an element just as equally necessary: we might *à priori* arraign this system as full of contradiction and absurdity; and we might suppose that, were we to found a world, it would be deformed by no such unwise and ridiculous regulations. And yet how useless and foolish would be all our reasonings and theories! For, when we should deign to come down from our air-built castles, and to take our survey of common life, we should behold there in constant operation the very things we had thought so objectionable and unreasonable: we should find that the Ruler of the world had admitted into it the very ingredients we had reprobated, the very elements we had scornfully rejected, and we should be bound to confess that our principles had been weak and visionary.

But just this ought to be the final conclusion also of such as speculate and theorize on the announcement of Christ. However objectionable they may once have thought it, they are

bound to resign their reasonings, and confess they see here a harmony between the works of God and the words of Christ, which reflects a light on both, and proves them to have proceeded from one and the same source. At least they are bound to allow that, if they must renounce the religion of Christ on account of his assertion in the passage before us, they must equally join the conspiracy of those foolish men who venture to say in their hearts, on account of the wickedness and punishment in the world, There is no God!

Some persons may be disposed to think the spiritual world invested with a character of horror, as presenting in the case of the wicked the sad picture of multitudes of condemned criminals, who are constantly passing away to suffer the punishment of hell. And yet the system of the natural world contains the same character of terror: for, although much is smiling and gay in the external features of it, yet when we enter in a more deep and scrutinizing manner into its internal constitution, we must acknowledge that multitudes are constantly taking the place of others who have gone before them, and are coming into the

world, some to experience the same bitterness of grief or pain, and others to become the same terrible monuments of the indignation both of God and man, as those who had preceded them.

SECTION XXXIII.

“ MATT. XIX. 21.—“ *If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven : and come and follow me. But the young man went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.*”

THIS has been thought an unreasonable request ; but the question is, whether nothing of this kind is found out of the Bible ; whether the natural providence of God never calls on His creatures—never requires and compels them to do the same as what our Lord here called on this young man to do. And every one knows that God does so perpetually.

Men are often required by the course of nature to part at once with their all. War, foreign and domestic, shipwreck, fire, bad speculations, and various other things, make men beggars in a moment. And what is this but saying to us, Thou shalt part at once with all thou hast ?

I am on the eve of purchasing an estate :

I sell my securities, and put £20,000 for a week into a bank : the bank meanwhile breaks, and I am suddenly ruined.

A letter brings me in a moment unexpected news of the death of my wife or child, or of the loss of something which I value more than any other thing on earth : I am thrown, without warning, into the situation of the young man.

In short, we are not our own, either in nature or in religion. A mad dog bites me; lightning blasts me; paralysis benumbs me. Even a swarm of bees has been known to alight and detain a person a miserable prisoner. All these things even in the natural world call on us to hold loosely what we have, and to be ready to give up what we have at a moment's notice. Even a Roman moralist could lay claim to this feeling, and might have shamed the young man in the gospel. Speaking of the shifting nature of fortune, Horace observes,*

“ I can applaud her while she stays ;

But, if she shake her *rapid* wings,

I can resign with careless ease

The richest gifts her favour brings :

Then folded lie in Virtue's arms,

And honest Poverty's undower'd charms.

* Francis's Hor. Od. iii. 29.

SECTION XXXIV.

MATT. XIX. 23.—“ *A rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. It is easier for a camel (or, rather, rope) to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.*”

THE disciples are stated to have been exceedingly amazed at this declaration; and certainly many are amazed at it to this day. And yet does not the universal experience of the world bear testimony to the strong temptations which attend wealth, to the innumerable evils into which it leads men, to the ruin of morals, both public and private, which it brings with it?

I might make a volume in citing passages from pagan writers, all tending to the confirmation of the Scripture assertion; but a few must suffice. Lycurgus* considered the use of gold and silver as the groundwork of all crime, and forbade the possession of them on pain of death. Sallust† calls money the most pernicious

* Justin. 3. 2.

* Sall. 1. ad Cæs.

cious evil. Isocrates* observes that wealth is the minister of vice rather than of virtue, as it affords facilities to indolence, and invites the young to pleasures. Juvenal† remarks that the love of money increases in the same proportion as the possession of it. Ovid calls riches the incentive to evils.‡ Propertius calls money “the cruel food for the vices of men.”§ Such a love for possessing money, says Pliny,|| has invaded men, that they seem rather to be possessed by it than to possess it. So much so, that Cicero declares¶ that the world particularly admires the man who is not affected by money, and considers such a person as having gone through the ordeal of fire. The same writer observes,** that “what the Pythian oracle declared, that no other cause but avarice should destroy Sparta, it seemed to have predicted not only to the Lacedemonians, but to all other opulent nations.” But a writer, already cited, represents so forcibly the effects of wealth on his countrymen, that I must bring his words†† before the reader: “When Carthage was de-

* Isocr. ad Demonic.

† Juv. xiv. 139.

‡ Ov. M. i. 140.

§ Prop. iii. 7.

|| Plin. 9. Ep. 30.

¶ Cic. Offic. ii.

** Cic. Off. ii. 22.

†† Sall. Cat. 10. Rose.

stroyed, then Fortune began to exert her malice, and throw everything into confusion. Ease and riches, the grand objects of the pursuit of others, ruined those who had undergone toils and dangers. First a love of money possessed their minds, then a passion for power, and these were the seeds of all the evils that followed. For avarice rooted out faith, probity, and every worthy principle; and in their stead substituted insolence, inhumanity, and a mercenary spirit. Ambition obliged many to belie with their tongues the sentiments of their hearts, and to value friendship and enmity only as they conduced to interest. These corruptions at first grew by degrees, and were sometimes checked by correction. At last, the infection spreading like a plague, the state was entirely changed, and the government, from being the most righteous and equitable, became cruel and insupportable." And again :* "When riches began to be held in esteem, virtue languished, and poverty was deemed a reproach. And thus luxury, avarice, and pride, *all springing from riches*, enslaved the Roman youth : they wantoned in rapine and prodigality, trampled on modesty, friendship, and continence, and

* Sall. Cat. cap. 12.

threw off all consideration and restraint." But, if we would wish to see more at large what wealth effected at Rome, let us survey the manners and characters of the rich as portrayed by the graphic poetry of Juvenal, and observe how it converted the city into an abode of every abominable crime—into a very pandemonium.

We need not pursue these quotations further. They sufficiently establish the alarming inroads of riches on morality and virtue, and justify our Lord in bringing them prominently before his hearers, and declaring their immense power on the heart, and their pernicious tendency to deteriorate it, and to render it unfit for his kingdom. Christianity has indeed done much to mitigate their evils, and to soften their more disgraceful features ; but enough remains, even in our own times and country, to show the need there was for pointing out to the expectants of a holy state the dangers arising from wealth ; and in nothing did Christ show more clearly his intimate acquaintance with the human heart, than in being explicit in warning men of its perilous snares. We are all too apt to think that it is sufficient to call ourselves Christians, and then that we become Christians at once in heart and in life ; but those best know

the strength of temptation who have most struggled with it; and those best know the immense influence of wealth and power on the heart, and how they are wont to wrap and entwine themselves round its fibres, so as to strangle the virtuous principle, who have most brought them under their dominion, just as those confess most their own ignorance and the depths of science who have made the deepest researches into it. I add power; for the influence of power is of the same kind with that of wealth; so that what Sophocles* says of a prince, that it is not easy for him to be pious, is just as true of a rich man. Away then with the opinions of mere sciolists and tiros in virtue: let us ask the sentiments of proficient, and they will give their verdict in favour of the wisdom displayed in the strong assertion of the Scripture before us.

* Soph. Aj. 1367.

SECTION XXXV.

MATT. xxiii. 35, 36.—“ *That on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias. Verily I say, all these things shall come upon this generation.*”

THIS has been thought a hard saying. But it is really only a counterpart of what is found out of Revelation. “Remember, Romans,” says Horace,* “that, though you had no concern in the sacrilege of your ancestors, you shall be punished for their crimes, if you do not take care to repair the public edifices.” And on these words, observes Davidson, as has been already mentioned, “the wisest among the heathens have acknowledged this truth, that, till reparation is made, the posterity of criminals are liable to the punishment due to the offence of their fathers. It is worthy of observation, that all religions seem to unite in this point.”

* Od. 3. 6. 1.

“The Lydians,” says Herodotus,* “proceeded on their journey, and are said to have received the following reply from the Pythian priestess: that to avoid the determination of destiny was impossible even for a divinity; *that Cræsus in his person expiated the crimes of his ancestor in the fifth descent.*” On this passage Larcher cites Cicero indeed as repudiating this doctrine: “Such, you say, is the power of the gods, that if death shall deliver an individual from the punishment due to his crimes, vengeance shall still be satisfied on his children, his grandchildren, or some of his posterity. Wonderful as may be the equity of Providence, will any city suffer a law to be introduced which shall punish a son or grandson for the crimes of his father or his grandfather?” And Larcher will have it that Cicero speaks as a wise man, Herodotus as a superstitious man. Yet the course of nature is the best authority and comment on these matters, and to its decisions the wisest show their wisdom in bowing.

We have already seen the general doctrine of the visitation of men’s sins on their posterity,

* Bk. i. 91.

as affecting the condition of Adam's race, and as laid down in the Second Commandment. The case before us belongs to the same class, and receives ample defence from what has been said in reference to those points. But, in a more particular and a more pertinent way,—conceive a successive race of tyrannical or profligate kings misgoverning a kingdom, and each handing down to the other its finances and general state in a worse condition than that in which he found it. Things go on from bad to worse: the treasury is more and more exhausted; the people more and more discontented; poverty, famine, sedition, disease, more and more on the increase, and each succeeding heir to the throne more despised and abominated than his predecessor,—until at length the crimes of the whole race fall in condign vengeance on one particular prince, and involve him in irreparable ruin. No one will say that this representation is unnatural; and if it is not, it is a complete parallel to the case mentioned in St. Matthew. But, indeed, history furnishes perpetual instances of this kind of providential dealing with states and princes. We may, if we please, arraign this course of Providence, and charge it with folly; but still Nature is

stronger than man, and will have its way in spite of his objections. And if Nature is too powerful for us, let us own in consistency that Revelation, when running in conformity with it, is equally irresistible.

SECTION XXXVI.

MATT. XXV. 29.—“ *From him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.*”

And LUKE xix. 26.

THIS has been thought a self-contradictory assertion. But I have already attempted to prove, in Section IV., that the Scripture rather establishes than weakens its claim to a divine origin by employing *figurative* language. The passage now under consideration comes under the same train of reasoning as the passages which were considered in that section.

The self-same mode of speaking which we meet with here, occurs in the satires of a pagan writer, who abounds indeed in powerful sentiment and in nervous expression, but who is not to be accused of want of judgment or of good sense. “Codrus had nothing,” says Juvenal;* “who will deny it? And yet *all that nothing he lost.*”

* Sat. i. 208.

The concluding sentence of St. John's gospel will deserve a place here. Although we find there a highly-wrought expression, yet it is an intelligible one; nor did the acute and judicious Paley see any absurdity in making use of it, when he wrote the following words in his *Moral Philosophy**: "Had then the same particularity which obtains in human laws, so far as they go, been attempted in the Scriptures, throughout the whole extent of morality, it is manifest they would have been by much too bulky to be either read or circulated; or rather, as St. John says, *even the world itself*† *could not contain the books that should be written.*"

I cannot finish this section without inviting the attention of the Roman Catholic to it, as viewed in connexion with the words of our Lord, "This *is* my body."

* Book i. ch. 4.

† This word *itself* is proof, in my opinion, against an interpretation which has been given of these words, "that the world would not receive or admit them as divine." For what sense can be given to the above adjective? Commentators are too much afraid of suffering Scripture to speak its own language.

SECTION XXXVII.

MATT. xxv. 46.—“ *And these shall go away into everlasting (eternal) punishment ; but the righteous into life eternal.*”

MARK ix. 45, 46.—“ *The fire that shall never be quenched, where their worm dieth not.*”

REV. xiv. 10, 11 ; and other places.

ETERNAL punishment has been represented as militating against the goodness, and even the justice, of God.

Now what is first to be distinctly attended to is, that eternal pain is already absolutely going on in the world. Watch those agonizing pains, those writhing limbs, those quivering lips, those distorted features ; these, indeed, in each particular case come to an end ; but in a moment you may transfer yourself to another scene as horrifying as the last, and to others, in continuous succession. In short, pain *is* eternally racking the world—*is* unremittingly fastening on the vitals of its victim. The system of the

world is, in fact, so constituted, that it admits and keeps up everlasting pain.

But further: it is the common language of mankind, that pains of various kinds are *punishments*. Thus we say commonly, and we cannot prevent our either saying or feeling so, He has his deserts; it is his own fault; he has nobody to blame but himself; with several other things of the like kind. And thus it is not only true that *eternal pain* is absolutely going on in nature, but also *eternal punishment*.

A succession, then, of everlasting pain and everlasting punishment is going on in nature. This cannot be denied or resisted.

The only difference in the system of Nature and in that of Revelation is, that the *succession* of pains and punishments is not alike. *Different* persons in one are their subjects, *the same* persons in the other. And no doubt the knowledge that sooner or later our pains and punishments must end is an alleviation of our distresses: but it is an alleviation only, not a removal. The difference is not such as to make us, if we would be consistent in our judgment, think the system of Nature all-merciful and beneficent, and that of Revelation the reverse. It is a

difficult problem why Nature allows of eternal pain and punishment to be suffered by *successive* subjects of them: it is only a more difficult problem why Revelation allows of eternal pain and punishment to be suffered by the *same* subjects of them. The difference lies in the manner, not in the thing itself. Pain and punishment are still pain and punishment, whether endured by the same or successive sufferers.

But we will now endeavour to see whether, *as far as it goes*, the present system of Nature bears out by approximation the point objected against, eternal punishment as taking place *in the same persons*.

Now every day's experience seems to show to us by actual facts, that we are totally incompetent, *à priori*, to judge what is the proper duration or quantity of compensative sufferings. Our feelings of justice are frequently offended by the actual course of human affairs, which is often found fully to bear out the truth of the poet's assertion,

“ And for a moment's guilty pleasure
A world of woe ensues.”

For observe how commonly one deviation from virtue, (we might more particularly instance it in the case of the female sex,) observe how the

misapplication of advantages of every kind, how even the neglect of applying them,* involves the whole remainder of life in inextricable confusion, and in irremediable ruin. One wrong step, or one advantage not taken, and all is wrong afterwards. All sorrow or repentance is utterly unavailing towards a restoration to former advantages. No care, no labour, are sufficient to put persons in the same state as before. Forfeited life, or liberty and space and country and ease forfeited *for life*, are often the consequences of single offences. In short, "many natural punishments are *final* to him who incurs them, *if considered in his temporal capacity*."†

Now who can give any account of these things? Who can explain why the whole remainder of the life of a man, all the rest of his existence *here*, should be embittered by some previous vice—or why life should be prematurely cut off through it by means of disease or of the executioner, in such a manner that we are

* As in the well-known passage of Shakspeare,—

"There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which taken at the flood leads on to fortune;
Neglected, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries."

† Butl. Anal. Part i. ch. 2.

led to think some vices receive too severe a punishment; and that some men "have received of the Lord's hand not only double for all their sins,"* but what bears no proportion at all to the guilt incurred?

The *principle*, then, seems established in nature,—the principle, of which the carrying out into eternity is objected to. But, if the principle is really established, differences in other respects—(I mean here more particularly the difference between a finite period and infinity)—are insignificant. And why? Because God's justice, if apparently inexplicable in lesser matters, can be only more so in greater ones; but is, in fact, inexplicable both in lesser and in greater ones.

Persons may be said to suffer, too, in their descendants here; and there is no saying how many generations men do actually suffer in this way. Their families become ruined through them, and remain so for ages.

But there is one point in which a kind of everlasting effect of vice takes place in the ordinary course of things; and that is the disgrace and infamy it attaches to the memory of individuals. "Have regard therefore," says Cicero,† "to those who will pass sentence

* Isaiah xl. 42.

† Pro M. Marcell. ix.

upon your conduct *many ages hence*." "Oh wretched man," says the same writer,† "if thou perceivest! more wretched, if thou dost not perceive, that this is committed to history; that this stands on record; *that no future age will ever forget this fact!*" So that the fate which the prophet Daniel* denounces on the wicked, that they shall "awake to shame and *everlasting contempt*," is borne out in a remarkable manner by the actual course of nature. And there are men, who would rather suffer bodily torment for ever, if they might do so without disgrace, than suffer ignominy for ever without bodily torment.

We see then actually *in nature* various things which show us to be but poor judges of the proper measure of the recompense of vice; and as we are clearly ignorant of it, we should leave the adjudication of it to the tribunal of God. Whether, as has been asserted, a sin against a Being of infinite holiness brings with it, in the very necessity of things, an infinite punishment; whether, as others have thought, the eternal punishment of some might, if we had organs by which we could see *the whole*

* 2 Phil. 22.

† Dan. xii. 2.

of things, appear conducive to the good of the whole; or whether any other theories may be entertained by us, we may see quite enough, as has been stated above, in the order of nature, to make us suspend our judgment, and bow to the assertions of Scripture.

Nor, in doing so, do we go counter to the expectations and fears of men, as they have been entertained by persons unconnected with the christian faith. Mankind seem to have agreed for the most part in the opinion; and, as philosophers have observed, that the general consent of mankind is the voice of reason, and as we argue for the truth of religion itself, and even for the existence of God, from the general consent of mankind,* so an opinion as general as that in question must be admitted to be entitled to respect, were there no other reasons in its favour. Thus the fables of old respecting Tantalus and Sisypheus and Ixion and the Danaides are founded on the belief of everlasting punishment. And we find this doctrine expressly stated in the Pagan writers.

Thus Plato assures us that “those whose sins are incurable are by a just destiny thrown head-

* See Dugald Stewart's *Philosophy of the Human Mind*.

long into Tartarus, *from whence they never go out.*”* And Cicero assures the Roman senate that “Jupiter will drive Catiline and his accomplices from his altars and temples, and will destroy *with eternal punishments* the haters of good men and the enemies of their country, both living and dead.”†

Virgil announces that in hell,—

“The wretched Theseus sits, and will for ever sit.”‡

And, speaking of those who were punished in hell for being suicides, he says :

“With late repentance now they would retrieve
The bodies they forsook, and wish to live ;
Their pains and poverty desire to bear,
To view the light of heaven, and breathe the vital
air :
But Fate forbids ; the Stygian floods oppose,
And with nine circling streams the captive souls
enclose.”§

Lucretius|| also tells us, that

* Plat. Phæd. ch. 143.

† Cic. in Catil. i. 13.

‡ Æn. 617.

§ Dryden's Vers. of vi. Æn. 436—9.

|| Book i. v. 108—112.

“ Could we but see a certain end of pain,
We might with justice deem the prophets vain:
But now no wit their threatening circumvents,
Since we must fear in death *eternal punishments*.”

Those, however, who raise objections to eternal punishments, should also raise objection to eternal rewards of happiness. For, if there is an unseemly disproportion in the former, there is the same unseemly disproportion in the latter. Yet objectors to the latter are scarcely to be met with.

There is a fallacy, however, and a great one, in this behaviour. Let us object to neither doctrine, or to both. Yet how small seems to have been the number of those who have not indulged the hope of immortality, who have not “shuddered at destruction?” Horace rejoiced in anticipation of posthumous fame, that he should not die entirely;* and Ovid boasted that he had reared to himself a monument which neither envy nor time should ever destroy.† And in respect of another life, the Pagans had

* Horace, Od. iii. 30—6.

† See Ovid at the end of his *Metamorphoses*. To secure fame among posterity, Thucydides takes the precaution of inserting his own name several times in his History, as being the author of its several portions.

their happy isles, their fortunate groves, their Elysian fields. The hopes indeed of another state, wherein happiness shall endure for ever, seem natural to mankind : and are, with great inconsistency, contended for at the present day by some, who coolly affect to doubt the eternity of punishment. Yet, if one is too great a recompense, so is the other also.

But let us beware. Persons have in all ages thought it impossible they could be visited with such and such punishments, which however at length did afflict them.* And not seldom have offenders been executed at the gallows or the block, who had ridiculed the idea of such sufferings, and derided their possibility. What occurs in this life, may occur in the next : and as serious mistakes have been made in the former case, analogy leads us to think it possible they may be made in the latter. Boldness and presumption do not always protect us here from ruin : can it be impossible that they should not protect us from it in a life to come ?

* “ They can’t put us in prison,” said one person to another. “ We *are* in prison,” was the reply of his friend and his fellow-sufferer.

Persons again have in *this* world been visited with bodily pains, which they have thought totally incompatible with the doctrine that God is merciful. It is said indeed of an eminent English mathematician of a former age, that, in his paroxysms of pain by the stone, he would inveigh most fiercely against the divine mercy, and ask of his family around him, if they could think that a merciful God would thus torture a poor mortal like himself. As the complaints of this philosopher made his sufferings not the less real, because they made him doubt the goodness of God; so it may be found hereafter, to the dismay of many, that they will raise in another world complaints against the same divine attribute, and be in the situation of those unhappy persons mentioned in the Revelations, (xvi. 11.) who “blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores.”

Let us fear, then, lest, while rejecting eternal punishment, we run into the very thing we reject. This sort of mistake is not very unfrequently committed in the course of *this* world. A mistake of this kind gave occasion of old to the remark, that “it is folly to die through fear

of death," and Martial has poured his invective on it :

" Fannius, 'tis said, while flying from the foe,
Inflicted on himself the mortal blow :
Now is it not an obvious madness, say,
To take, lest others take, your life away ?"*

Let us beware lest we too, not indeed through our fears but through our derisions of eternal punishment, court and bring down on ourselves the eternal punishment which we deride.

Some say : " I wonder that men of reason and talent can believe such a doctrine as that of endless punishment." But they should not stop here. They state a fact, but they should carry it on : they should allow, that, since men of reason and ability believe this doctrine, it becomes on this account more credible and more probable. The excellent understanding and acuteness of such persons in this world's learning and knowledge should lead us to think they may have some penetration in the learning and knowledge also of another world.

Nor will it cause us much surprise, that some men of undoubted ability have questioned the

* Martial. Epigr. i. 80.

truth of this doctrine, if we bear in mind on what slender grounds some of them have doubted the most incontrovertible truths. Thus, after Pope had asked the question in the first draught of his Universal Prayer,

“ Can crimes of moment claim the rod
Of everlasting fires ? ”

he immediately asks another, which shows how little he was fit for managing these questions :

“ Or that offend great nature’s God,
Which nature’s self inspires ? ”

Thus in fact justifying every iniquity that was ever committed.

Others say : “ The salvation of some is gained at too great a sacrifice, if others who are lost are to suffer for ever.” But this is, after all, a mawkish and a puerile philanthropy. For, as we have observed before, eternal pain is actually going on in the system of things around us : and yet the world continues in its routine of pleasures and enjoyments, although at the known expense of a great quantity of pain and suffering to a great number of persons in all ages and periods.

And it may be thought by others hard that

persons should be dragged, as it were, into the world to run so sad a hazard, without their assent being antecedently given. Yet so it is with the man who is hanged on the gallows, who is agonized with the stone or the cancer, who works in chains in Siberia—their assent was never obtained, yet all these are obliged to endure. So indifferent is the course of nature here to our thoughts and imaginations. And the course of Providence hereafter may be so likewise.

And an answer, founded on the actual state of things in the world, may be returned to one who says that God is a tender father, and who cites such a passage as that of Terence: “A small punishment for a great offence on the part of his son suffices the father.” I would say, look to the gallows and to Siberia, and you will see how severe is the punishment which God thinks proper to inflict in the ordinary course of nature.

If, however, any shall say after all, “Well, I cannot answer these arguments; but still the doctrine appears to me an impossible one, and I shall run my chance and reject it:” let me ask, if a chance *is to be* run, had it not better be a chance on the safe side? Caution and

prudence lead us in affairs of this world to choose that conduct which appears least beset with evils : and why are we to set at defiance, in matters of eternity, the very rules and regulations we naturally act on in matters of time ?*

- * See a little Tract entitled, " I don't care."

SECTION XXXVIII.

MATT. xxvi. 24.—“ *It had been good for that man if he had not been born.*”

WHAT! it is said, is it possible that such an assertion should be justly predicated of any of the creatures of a merciful God?

I would say, that it is very possible ; indeed, that, if we consider only the present life, I believe the assertion must be allowed by everybody to be a correct one. May we not truly say that it had been good for the wretch, who suffers death at the gallows, if he had not been born? for the man, who is condemned for his remaining years to work at the galleys, to labour in the mines of Siberia, or to waste away in the dungeons of the Inquisition? for the man who dies in phrensy and despair at the loss of his fortunes, at the failure of his schemes, at the profligacy of a beloved child? for the man who dies a lingering death in agony from the stone, the cancer, the lupus, or some other painful disorder?

God knows all this : He knows that His crea-

tures will be and are thus tortured : and yet He allows it. He might, we think, have prevented their existence, but does not. And who will say that what happens now, shall not happen hereafter in a final state of retribution ?

SECTION XXXIX.

MATT. xxvi. 26.—“ *Take, eat; this is my body.*”

It is well known that these words are understood very differently by Protestants and Roman Catholics, and, indeed, form a very important part of their variety of opinion. It is asked what could be the use of employing words which have produced such fierce contests between Christians; especially since it would have been so easy to say on one side, this is the sign of my body; on the other, the bread is changed into my body.

Now this objection would be valid, if we did not find that it is perfectly consonant with the general course of the world. Let us consider the bitter animosities and protracted struggles which have arisen from different interpretations of acts of Parliament, of wills, copyrights, leases, and other deeds, of traditions, instructions, orders and directions of all kinds. Let us consider the serious mistakes which have been made by an erroneous judg-

ment formed of the meaning of medical prescriptions; and let us consider the wrong notions of numerous people or individuals, founded on a misinterpretation of the appearances of the heavens, as of comets and eclipses; of any strange appearances on the earth, as the lights of swamps and marshes; of dreams, and of the flights of birds. Hence the omens, the second-sights, the witchcrafts, the spectres, which have misled and perplexed men; and indeed to such an extent, that the greatest and most cultivated minds, as that of Johnson, have fallen under the influences of some or all of them; and many lives have been sacrificed by the superstitious ideas which have been held respecting them by the wisest legislators. Then let us consider the evils which have flowed from the contradictory opinions of lawyers, physicians, and senators on the questions which have come before them: from wrong judgments put on other men's intentions, on the prospects held out by various schemes, on novel systems and theories. In short, it is difficult to say how this objection would upset the very foundation of society. But it is easy to see, that, if followed out and transferred to

the government of the world, it must lead to a resolute denial of the goodness and wisdom of God, or even of His very existence. We must discard therefore, as perfectly visionary and mischievous, the authority of a speculation, which would lead to such disorganizing results ; and honestly concede that Scripture is not in fault, when its accusers censure it for acting in concurrence with the universal course of Providence.

SECTION XL.

MATT. xxviii. 19.—“ *Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*”

FROM this and other passages the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity is deduced : a doctrine which has been objected to as unreasonable and impossible.

But it has been urged, and urged well, that things may be above or beyond our understanding, and yet not contrary to it. It has been argued that, in the doctrine in question, it is not maintained that three are one, or that one is three, in the same sense. And, indeed, able divines, as Pearson, Waterland, and Wardlaw, have challenged objectors to prove a self-contradiction in it.

But I pass on to what is more in the plan of this work ; to bring forward analogies in nature bearing on the point. And these crowd on us in considerable force. And, first, it has been remarked* that at present we are mere

* Dr. Valpy's Address to his Parishioners, p. 16.

children in understanding; and that as children cannot comprehend the reason or the nature of many branches of knowledge with which the developement of their faculties enables them afterwards to become acquainted,—so we may, in a world more favourable than this to the enlargement of our mental powers, reach the depth and height of such mysteries as that before us: that as there is an almost infinite distance between the reasoning power of a Newton as viewed in his cradle or as viewed in his maturer years, so we may pass from our knowledge here to inconceivable extensions of it in a future state, and be admitted there to see the solution of difficulties which here seemed insuperable.

Secondly, it has been observed that there are combinations in nature, of which, although we cannot give the mode, we are still constrained to confess the existence. The mixture of liquids, the union of body and spirit in man, and of juice and bark in trees,—these are advanced as leading us to think there may be combinations, which we can neither see nor comprehend.*

* I have heard it ingeniously suggested, that, on the supposition of there being *necessarily*, that is, by ne-

But, lastly, analogy directs us to take still higher ground ; and to affirm, that were religion perfectly within the scope of our comprehension, and did it contain nothing inscrutable to man, it would by this very circumstance justly subject itself to the charge of not having come from God. We understand, we may say, nothing of the causes of what we see, of the most common operations of nature. The growth of a plant, the formation of our own bodies, the wonders of electricity and gravitation, — all these and numerous other things are perfectly beyond our understanding.] And if the Almighty veils these things from us, and is to us obscure and mysterious in His operations of nature, undoubtedly it must be supposed that the same character of mystery and incomprehensibility would appear in those of Revelation. Instead, therefore, of being driven to infidelity by the doctrine of the Trinity, we should rather confess that it harmonizes with the works of the visible creation, and believe it referable to the same Almighty cause which produced *them*.

cessity of nature, a perfect and perpetual identity of mind and will in the three divine persons, they would of necessity be only one God.

It may be said—This is possibly correct reasoning ; but, even on supposition of the truth of the doctrine, what reason is there why it should be taught to man ? This is no doubt a fair subject of inquiry ; but, as it does not fall within the object of this publication, I will merely state, that theological works abound, in which the distinct offices of the Three Persons in the Trinity are urged as carrying with them important bearings on the redemption and salvation of mankind, and in which it is argued that it highly concerns us to be acquainted with them.

SECTION XLI.

LUKE ii. 34.—“ *This child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.*”

IT detracts greatly, it is urged, from the value of the birth of Jesus, that he is only a partial, not a universal benefit to man; and that many will not only not derive advantage, but will receive injury, from his appearance on earth.

But look now at yonder sun. Is it the harbinger of perfect, unalloyed happiness, peace, health, fertility, and plenty? Or does it not bring with it also misery, war, sickness, pestilence, and famine? See yonder babe which has just struggled into existence. Is he born to uninterrupted, unmixed felicity? Or is he born as well to sorrow, pain, and death, as to pleasure, joy, and life? Does the earth present us with nothing but pleasing and delightful scenes? Has it only the feast, the song, and the dance; or does it give us also the sombre sight of the prison, the death-bed, and the funeral? Does it always deck itself with the myrtle and the rose; or does

it also extend to us the cypress and the night-shade?

You will say: "True, but Christ was to be a remedy." Show me, then, the panacea of nature. Nature has given us in the natural world means for restoration and for recovery: but are these means all certain and efficient? Are all physicians agreed on the proper remedies to be applied? Are they all agreed on the nature of our diseases? Are they all wise and skilful? Has poison never been given by mistake in place of medicine? Have the meat and the drink, which nature intended for the refreshment of the exhausted body, never been the cause of intemperance and destruction? Have the means given to man for remedying his ignorance always been used in the proper manner, nor ever made the source of his ultimate ruin?

No wonder, then, if Jesus also, the great rectifier of what is wrong, the great healer of the maladies of the mind, becomes, by the perversion of man, the occasion of falling to many: no wonder if "he is made a stone of stumbling and rock of offence" (1 Pet. ii. 8): no wonder if, like his apostles, (2 Cor. ii. 16,) while he is on the one hand "the savour of life

unto life," he is, on the other, "the savour of death unto death."

I forbear here to add other illustrations, reserving them for the consideration of the objections which have been made on 1 Pet. iii. 16.

SECTION XLII.

LUKE xiv. 26.—“ *If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.*”

JOHN xii. 25.—“ *He that loveth his life shall lose it : and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.*”

THIS seems a hard saying. But we will observe, first, that this is somewhat differently expressed in Matt. x. 37 : “ He that *loveth* father or mother *more than* me, is not worthy of me ; and he that *loveth* son or daughter *more than* me, is not worthy of me.” We may have, therefore, ground for saying, that the expression in St. Luke may be understood in a modified sense. And it has been observed that this modified sense of the word *hate* occurs in other parts of Scripture. As in Gen. xxix. 31 : “ When the Lord saw that Leah was *hated*,” the word *hated* means *less loved*, as it is actually expressed in verse 30. Refer-

ences are made, also, to Deut. xxi. 15—17; Prov. xxv. 7; Matt. vi. 24. Besides, it is expressly observed by St. Paul that “no man ever yet *hated* his own flesh,”* and Christ is equally express on the duty of honouring our parents.† If then we are allowed to make God “his own interpreter,” and explain Scripture by Scripture, we have abundant reason to think that we may understand the word *hate* to mean *hate in comparison of me, hate in a comparative manner*. This kind of idiom, indeed, prevails in Scripture: “Set your affections on thing above, not on things on the earth:” “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.”

Should we stop here, the reader might be inclined to think that this passage can scarcely, with propriety, claim a place in this work, and that it rather belongs to the commentators. But we go further, and observe, that *heathens* have not scrupled either to employ the same language, or to act on its full meaning.

Thus Tyrtæus, in speaking of what the soldier should do in battle, breaks out into these stirring words: “Let us fight with spirit for

* Eph. v. 29.

† Mark vii. 9—13.

our country and our children, *no longer sparing our souls*. Ye young ones, stand by one another, and fight, nor enter on flight or fear: but carry in your breast a lofty spirit, *nor love your souls*, while fighting with the foe Fear not the crowd of men; but let each hold his shield, and go straight against the front of the foe; *counting his soul as odious*, but death as dear as the sun.* This last expression is the very counterpart of that in the gospel. And if the Greeks gave a coward the name of a *soul* or *life-lover*, the brave man might have been called a *life-hater*.

Similar, also, in effect is the expression of Cicero:† that “*to despise pleasure, riches, and even life itself*, and to regard them as nothing, when they come to be compared with the public interest, is the duty of a brave and exalted spirit.” But the heathen writers are full of exhortations to think nothing of our life, but to hold it cheap and valueless, in the service of our country or our families. If now “not to count one’s life dear unto oneself,”—if to throw that life away, and count it comparatively *odious*, in the service of family and country,

* Tyrt. Ode iv. 13—18; iii. 3—6.

† Cic. Off. iii. 5.

was considered, ay, and is considered, a virtue; surely to act thus in the service of God must be a higher virtue still. But it did happen, and does happen, that it becomes a duty to care nothing even for our families, on pressing emergencies: and the heathens themselves felt the force of such motives and the duties of such emergencies.

“When we have gone,” says Cicero,* “over all the relationships that are in the world, we shall find that there is none of greater obligation, no one that is dearer and nearer to us, than that which we all of us bear to the public. We have a tender regard for parents, children, kindred, and acquaintance; but the love which we have for our native country *swallows up all other loves whatever.*” And the same writer by implication avers,† that “death, poverty, pain, or *loss of children, friends, or relations,*” ought not to be thought so great an evil as the doing of an injury.

Plato asks: “Are you ignorant that your country is more worthy of respect and veneration than *your father, mother, and all your relations together?*”‡ And he gives this ex-

* Cic. Off. i. 17. Cockm.

† Cic. Off. iii. 5.

‡ Plat. in his Crito, towards the end.

hortation: "Think neither *children*, nor life, nor anything else, of greater consequence than justice."*

Practical illustrations of these principles were very common among the ancients. Thus Cicero, in speaking of Regulus, observes,† that "not all the love which he had for his country, for his friends and relations, was able to detain him from Carthage; for that he thought it his duty not to violate his oath."

Manlius Torquatus,‡ on hearing his son charged with peculation by the deputies of Macedonia, investigated the matter, and, finding him guilty, declared him a disgrace to his family, and banished him from his presence.

Titus Manlius, in violation of his father the consul's orders that no person should fight with any of the enemy except in his post, bravely entered into single combat with Metius, and slew him. On his return, his father, turning away from his son in disdain, gave directions for his execution to the lictor in an assembly of the people: "For my part, the natural affection of a parent, and the instance

* Plat. in Crito. ch. 16.

† Cic. Off. iii. 27.

‡ Val. Max. v. 8. See Erasm. lib. 6. Apoph.

you have shown of bravery, affect me deeply. But since the authority of a consul's orders must be established by your death, or, by your escaping with impunity, be annulled for ever, even yourself will not refuse to restore by your punishment the discipline you have subverted."*

L. J. Brutus sat in judgment on his son for conspiring against the liberties of his country, and gave him over to the executioner; thus, to use the language of the Roman historian,† laying aside the father that he might act the consul; and preferring to lose his son, than to fail in his public duty.

M. Scaurus, on hearing that his son was returning to the city after a defeat, sent him word that he would rather see him dead on the field of battle, than alive in such disgrace; and that, if he had any sense of shame remaining, he would not venture into his father's presence. And accordingly his son destroyed himself.‡

A. Fulvius, on hearing that his son was going over to Catiline, intercepted and killed him, alleging that he had brought him into the

* Livy, viii. 6, 7.

† Val. Max. v. 8. Liv. lib. 2.

‡ Val. Max. *ibid.*

world not to assist Catiline against his country, but to assist his country against Catiline.*

Zaleucus punished his son with the loss of one of his eyes for violating his country's law against adultery.† And we find from Pausanias,‡ that Yennes, king of Tenedos, who had decreed the execution of adulterers, on being asked how his son should be dealt with who had been guilty of adultery, made this reply: "The law must be obeyed; execute my son."

But it is needless to multiply authorities. It may be said that these are stern cases of moral practice: but then the service of God may require in particular cases stern practice also; and if our duty to the state and to morality requires us to sacrifice our relatives rather than them, and practically to act towards those relatives as if they were *hateful* in our sight, and our very *enemies*, — much more must we be required to do so, when it is not the voice of our country or of morality, but the voice of God himself, which claims such

* Erasm. lib. 6. Apoph. from Val. Max.

† See Cic. 2 de Leg. Stob. Ser. 42. Ælian. Var. Hist. lib. 2.

‡ Lib. 10. See Erasm. in Adag.

conduct at our hands. That voice is so far from being opposed in such a requirement to the common course of human action on particular occasions, that it is in fact, as we have seen, in complete correspondence with it.

SECTION XLIII.

LUKE xviii. 1. — “ *Men ought always to pray.*”

It is urged that prayer must be needless, being addressed to a Being who knows all our wants before we ask Him.

It might have been supposed that Scripture would not fail to teach us the truth of what forms the basis of the reasoning of our objector. And, accordingly, it informs us explicitly, that God “ knoweth what things we have need of, before we ask Him.”*

It was not then in ignorance of this fact that our Lord gave us the above precept; but it was in the fullest apprehension that the whole system of the world proceeds under the employment of means. We have considered this point fully in Section IX., and therefore will refer the reader to that part of the work. Nothing, however, can be more agreeable to our habitual dependence on the use of means, than the words of Christ: “ Ask, and it

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SECTION XLIV.

JOHN iv. 54.—“ *This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judea into Galilee.*”

2 COR. xii. 12.—“ *The signs of an apostle were wrought among you in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.*”

MIRACLES, it is said, contradict the universal experience of men in all ages, and therefore are not to be believed in any case.

As all Revelation supposes and is founded on miracles, this is an objection of very vital importance. Overturn miracles, and you overturn Revelation. Let us then attentively consider whether there is anything insuperable in this much boasted assertion.

Now, to assert that miracles contradict the *universal* experience of all ages, is to take the question for granted. We all allow that *general* experience has had no cognizance of miracles; but we believe that *partial* experience has had cognizance of them, and how can we be driven from our position?

Universal experience, as has been well ob-

served, has no cognizance of ice and snow; and it has been said that an Asiatic might well be pardoned for disbelieving in their existence, as they never fell under his view. We might pardon him; but the mistake would prove his ignorance; and show us that we may be in egregious error, when we choose to assert that that does not exist which we ourselves have not seen, and because we have not seen it.

Then, again, universal experience would render nugatory the existence of a miracle; indeed it would make it an impossibility. That is not properly a miracle,—at least in the sense in which we are now using the term,—which all the world sees equally at the same time and in all places.

The truth is, questions of this kind must be viewed practically. Theoretic reasonings may appear grand and magnificent, and to differ from the rest of the world carries with it an air of dignified superiority. Our objectors appear to live in a world, for which they were not made, and in which they ought not to have existed: they soar above it, and it is much too low for them. They seem to have one of their own, in which they breathe more freely and live more sublimely. The hundreds of

millions of the earth are too superstitious for them. Some how or other, it so happens that nature has made the people of the world with certain feelings and tendencies; but then these are very wrong. Nature has made them almost universally inclined to believe miracles, to credit wonderful stories, ayè, to court them, and to be fond of surrendering their reason to their sweet and insinuating blandishments; but, then, this inclination is all bad and unphilosophical.

But, to speak seriously, it is the part of true philosophy to endeavour to control, not to extinguish, the feelings and tendencies of mankind; to put them into a right channel, not to bring them into ridicule and contempt. Eating and drinking must not be declared unphilosophical, because they are dreadfully abused; and reading and writing must not be suppressed, because they are converted by multitudes into instruments of evil. The greatest philosophers have acknowledged that what every body believes must be right,—I say everybody, for the exception of a very small minority only proves the rule,—and that the voice of the world is the voice of reason and of truth. They have argued thus indeed, as we

have already observed in support of the being of a God and of a future state. And does not, then, the general tendency of mankind to believe in miracles similarly establish a solid foundation for a belief in their existence? If it is not so, we must go to the full extent of the consequences: we must accuse the Creator of folly, and charge Him with the censure, that He has made a world fitted only for fools, and not for wise men; and that, therefore, He himself was foolish and not wise in framing such a world, and placing its inhabitants under so ridiculous a constitution !

And, indeed, the opinions of our objectors are found in practice to lead them to form a very contemptuous opinion of the world and its inhabitants. They regard creation rather as an exhibition of weakness than of power, of folly than of wisdom. It is granted that Nature is not without its difficulties; but our inability to solve them may be better resolved into the littleness of our comprehension, than into the weakness of God. Certainly this system of turning all creation into a joke and jest ought not to be considered a sign of superior wisdom, but rather of the most outrageous folly; for surely we have not yet arrived at

so high a state of intellectual excellence as to laugh at the very Being who framed our intellect, and who made us what we are !

In short, the world wants for its guides plain, practical men, and not theoretical dreamers of vain, visionary, atheistic speculations. Let us confess that God has made all things not at random, but with design ; not for laughter, but for adoration. And let us be desirous of following where He leads us ; and, instead of putting out the light of experience, (a fault which is vainly charged upon *us* here by our theorists, but which we throw back on them,) let us be glad to be illuminated by its rays, and to use it, as on all subjects, so on that of *miracles*, to a good and practical purpose.

It is urged, indeed, that there have been so many false assumptions of miraculous power, that there can be no such thing as a true one. But we do not reason so in other matters. Because there are numerous pretenders to science, no one will say that there is no such thing as science. Because there is a great deal of imposition in the world, this does not prove that there is no truth or sincerity in it. Because there is much bad coin, this does not prove there is none genuine. Indeed, false preten-

sions only establish more powerfully the reality and genuineness of that to which such false pretensions are made; for wherefore should they be made at all, but that men attach a value and an existence to that which is thus counterfeited?

I have advanced in this section a few arguments which lie on the surface. The reader will see the subject fully illustrated by Bishop Butler in his *Analogy*, Part ii. ch. 2; and by Archdeacon Paley in the *Preparatory Considerations* of his *Evidences of Christianity*; works which are too extensively circulated to allow anything but a reference to them.

SECTION XLV.

JOHN v. 4.—“ *For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water : whosoever then FIRST after the troubling of the water stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.*”

IT is thought a strange thing that only the *first* should be cured. If any one were cured, how not all ?

But how often does it happen that, of persons similarly afflicted, some are cured of their diseases, while others die ? Some have means, through friends or pecuniary resources, of travelling to the sea-side, of the advice of physicians of celebrity, and of various alleviations, while others have not these advantages. So that in the natural world some have no man to put them within the means of restoration ; but, while they are going on and suffering without hope, others go before them into the path of recovery, and become whole. The principle

is the same, although the miraculous occurrences are not.

Then, as to the circumstance of so many coming down to the pool with pain and difficulty, and only *one* being cured, this also is analogous. Some waste their substance on physicians, and are not cured at last; in an earthquake, or shipwreck, or conflagration, some only out of many are relieved after all their labours and struggles; and “in a race all run, but one receives the prize.”

Something, some place, some office, some appointment, is to be given away. There shall be five, ten, fifty, competitors for it; but after all kinds of strenuous and painful endeavour, only one can obtain it.

So many are the parallels in nature to what seems strange in the representations of Scripture. So well is Revelation justified and vindicated by the course of Providence.

SECTION XLVI.

JOHN xii. 37.—“ *Though he had done so many miracles before them, yet believed they not on him.*”

See also ACTS iv. 12—17.

DR. PALEY has shown, in his Evidences of Christianity,* so natural a coincidence in this resistance of the Jews to the impressions which might be supposed to have been made on their minds by the miracles of Christ and his apostles, with their national feelings respecting invisible agents, and their reference of all external demonstrations of power to diabolic agency,† that the passage before us, and others similar to it, may be regarded rather as confirming the truth of Scripture than as destroying it. Nations have their habits, as well as man in general: and, if Scripture has represented these features of national character truly, it has done much to obtain our assent and our belief in its truth. I cannot resist citing the following words,

* Part ii. ch. 4. sect. 1.

† This explains an objection to Numbers, xxii. 29, that Balaam did not express surprise at his ass speaking. He was accustomed to enchantment, as fully appears by Numb. xxiv. 1.

leaving the rest of the archdeacon's remarks to the perusal of the reader : " The power displayed in the miracles did not alone refute the Jewish solution, because the interposition of invisible agents being once admitted, it is impossible to ascertain the limits by which their efficiency is circumscribed. We of this day may be disposed to think such opinions too absurd to have been ever seriously entertained. They were at least as reasonable as the belief in witchcraft. They were opinions in which the Jews of that age had from their infancy been instructed: and those who cannot see enough in the force of this reason to account for their conduct towards our Saviour, do not sufficiently consider how such opinions may sometimes become very general in a country ; and with what pertinacity, when once become so, they are, for that reason alone, adhered to."

Connected with this objection, is the obstinacy exhibited by Pharaoh amidst the wonders in Egypt, and by the Israelites amidst the miracles in the wilderness. But it is well known by those who attend the beds of the sick, how those, who during the fears of death have seemed to have before their very view the torments of the damned, and have been racked

with apprehensions of a judgment, the presence of which they have all but realized, will, when danger has passed off, throw off with the strangest infatuation the horrors that possessed them, and bid defiance to all the vows extorted by their fears. Indeed, the human mind is often proof against the repeated alarms of conscience: it terrifies for a moment, but its voice at length falls dead on the dull ear and on the seared heart. And although, on the commission of a crime, men begin to feel the wretchedness of their state, yet, as Juvenal well observes, *

“ ———— When fair occasion comes in view,
Their crimes, with lust rekindled, they renew,
Till habit, second nature, bends their will,
And makes them tame and passive slaves to ill.”

Æschylus has, with much adherence to nature, remarked, that, in the terrible discomfiture of the fleet of Xerxes,

“ ————— Such as own'd
No God till then, awe-struck, with many a prayer,
Ador'd the earth and sky.”†

But, no doubt, the impression was transient.

* Juv. Sat. xiii. 239. Owen.

† Æsch. Pers. 503. Potter.

And so Pharaoh could relent under the "mighty hand of God," and make the promise in the hour of alarm, "I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer :"* but, when that was removed, he could harden again his heart, and fear neither God nor man, "neither would he let the children of Israel go."† And the Israelites, on their part, kept true to the natural corruption of their mind, imitated the hardness of heart of their late persecutor, and, at the very moment when the miraculous bread was in their mouths,‡ they drew down by their infatuated obduracy the indignation of God.

Their conduct, again, ought not to be considered as unnatural, when we recollect that, even in a court of justice held for the manifest purpose of punishing guilt, offenders are found daring enough to defy justice, and by theft to bring down upon themselves the very evils which they see criminals actually being sentenced to suffer.

* Exod. ix. 28.

† Ib. verse 35.

‡ Psa. lxxviii. 30.

SECTION XLVII.

ACTS xii. 19.—“ *When Herod had sought for him, (Peter,) and found him not, he examined the keepers (of the prison,) and commanded that they should be put to death.*”

It seems hard that the keepers should be executed because Peter had escaped by miraculous agency.

But many things seem equally hard in creation. Often, no doubt, have jailors at other times been punished, either by death, or by fine, or imprisonment, when their prisoners have escaped through no neglect or connivance of theirs, but through the art of the prisoners, or through the assistance of others, sometimes to defeat the cruel designs of despotic kings or magistrates. Socrates, indeed, uses* this reason against his accepting the proffered services of his friends to effect his escape from prison; that his flight would bring with it pernicious consequences to them.

It seems very hard that the merciful and hu-

* Xen. Apol. Socr.

mane, who bestow their kind exertions in alleviating the sufferings of the death-bed of the poor, should be cut off through the fatal assault of contagion. It seems hard that persons, in their benevolent attempt to save others from drowning, to rescue others from a house in flames, to assist others in their bankrupt fortunes, should fall victims to their humanity by being themselves drowned, or burnt, or ruined. And yet these things often occur.

It is said of the artful crocodile, that on the banks of rivers it imitates the cries of human sufferers, in order to entrap the humane traveller into its snare; and, as a reward for his compassion, to swallow and devour him. And every one remembers the tale of *Æsop*, which is constantly illustrated in human life, that the man, who took the serpent that was dying of cold into his bosom, was, on its recovering its vital heat, stung by it to death.

After all, we must remember that, where God is immediately concerned, He has a right to the lives of His creatures, and to take them away whenever He thinks fit. And we must remember, also, that bad men often involve with themselves the fate of those who have not participated in their crimes. Herod's malice

caused the death of these jailors ; but he was soon after brought to the end of his own days by the vengeance of God. Thus the innocent suffered with the guilty : and this is no uncommon occurrence ; for, in the words of Horace,*

“ When God in anger strikes the blow,
Oft with the bad the righteous bleed.”

* Hor. Od. iii. 2. Francis.

SECTION XLVIII.

ACTS xvi. 14.—“ *Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened.*”

ROM. ix. 16.—“ *It is not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.*”

1 COR. iv. 7.—“ *Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?*”

JOHN iii. 27.—“ *A man can receive nothing except it be given him from above.*” vi. 44.

“ *No man can come to me except the Father draw him.*”

1 COR. xv. 10.—“ *By the grace of God I am what I am.*”

JER. xxxi. 18.—“ *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned.*”

And especially ROM. ix. 20.

How is it, says the objector, that, after having described man as a machine, utterly dependent on another for motion, we yet find that Scripture holds man responsible, and blames him

for his crimes? John v. 40 :—"Ye will not (Greek, ye do not wish to) come to me that ye might have life." Ezek. xviii. 31, 32 :—"Why will ye die, O house of Israel? Wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye." Rom. xiv. 12 :—"Every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

It would be idle to attempt to deny that the subject of this objection is fraught with difficulty. It seems to contain, in fact, heights and depths, which are beyond the mind of man to ascend or to fathom.

The only thing to be done with an objection like this is, to show that the apparent contradiction complained of seems inseparable from the nature of things, and that it is found in heathen writings as well as in the Scripture.

Now we find the actual state of things to be such, that some choose the good and refuse the evil, while others choose the evil and refuse the good. We are generally satisfied by thinking that these differences depend on ourselves. And yet there must be something which determines our choice, something which gives us the power, or which, if we have the power, gives us also the will to perform that which is

in our power. What this is no one can explain to us.* It remains unexplained why one man pursues the road to virtue, while another declines it.

Let us look, then, into the writings of men unconnected with Scripture. And first let us ask how we can reconcile the discrepancy in Homer between attributing merit to the bravery and prudence of the generals in the Trojan war, and yet representing them as under the constant direction and sway of the gods and goddesses?

But the doctrine of divine inspiration and guidance was asserted not only by poets, but by philosophers, who, however, did not scruple to praise and to blame according to the respective characters and actions of individuals.

Thus Seneca says:† “There is no man good without God. He gives grand and noble imaginings: He dwells in every good man. If

* Thus, when Quintilian (lib. xii. cap. 11., Guthrie) remarks, “If a man resolves in good earnest to be virtuous, he will easily attain to those arts which lead to virtue. It is our own repugnancy that creates difficulties. Believe me, the way to truth and happiness is short and practicable to the willing mind,” he says nothing of the greatest difficulty of all, how the willing mind is produced.

† Sen. Ep. 41.

you see a person unintimidated by dangers, unaffected by lusts and passions, happy in adversity, and looking down as from an elevated place on all human things with disdain, will you not admire him?—will you not say, That virtue is too great for a little body like his: the divine influence has descended into his breast?" Again:* "If a man has an excellent and moderate spirit; if he laughs at what others hope or fear, it is the power of Heaven which moves and directs him: such a thing cannot exist without the aid of the Deity. Nay, God comes to men and into men. There is no mind good without God." And Cicero:† "We must believe that no good man is so but by the assistance of God. And there was never a great man without some divine inspiration." Again:‡ "If there is mind, virtue, good faith, concord among men, whence could they have originated but from the gods?" And he thus speaks in his oration for Sylla:§ "O ye immortal gods! it is you who then fired my mind with the desire of saving my country. You called me away from all other thoughts, and directed me

* Sen. Ep. 73.

‡ Id. ib. 79.

† Cic. de Nat. 165.

§ Id. pro Syll. 40.

wholly to the preservation of my country. You held before my mind the clearest light in the midst of the darkness of error and ignorance. I will attribute to you your own ; for I cannot attribute to my own genius only that I have discovered what was the best path to pursue amid the turbulence of public affairs." " Whatever good ye have done," said Bias,* " be persuaded you have received it from the gods." And Timoleon, on hearing himself praised, asserted† that he had nothing to do but to thank the gods, that, determining to free Sicily from despotism, they had chosen to appoint him to conduct its liberation: for he thought, says Nepos, that nothing among men was done without the inspiration of the gods. So Antoninus thanks‡ the gods for having given him their aids and suggestions towards spending his life wisely ; for having rescued him both in his youth and his old age from many opportunities of doing wrong ; for having given him good parents, tutors, and friends. And, similarly, Cicero again, in his Offices, observes,§ that

* Diog. Laert. in Bias. † Nep. in Timol. 4.

‡ Anton. lib. i. c. 17. in Vit.

§ Cic. Off. i. 32. Cockm.

“ there are some, whether it be out of mere good fortune, or a happy temper and disposition of soul, or, lastly, by the care and instructions of their parents, who pursue right methods and ways of living.”

Yet all these writers, as I have stated, could give praise or blame to men, could justify or condemn them. And yet it seems out of our power to explain how divine impartiality, as well as free-will and responsibility on our part, consist with these declarations of the influence of the Divine Being on the mind, and of our dependence on accidental circumstances of birth, temper, and education. But it is of great importance to find, that what appear anomalies in the Scriptures are not confined to them, but seem to belong to the very constitution of Nature.

The true practical deduction, therefore, is this, that, as the heathens were agreed to think that their fellow-creatures were responsible; and deserving of praise or punishment, whatever might be thought of divine impulse on the mind, and of accidental advantages or disadvantages; so we must believe that the promises and threatenings of the gospel are “ worthy of all acceptance,” although we are not able to

draw nicely the limits, or to determine the agreement, between the free will of man and the sovereign will of God. All these difficulties must ultimately be resolved by the practical results which would follow from pursuing the course to which, in our despair of explaining them, they would incline us. That course might be the abandonment of both natural and revealed religion: and here we should find ourselves in so gloomy a minority, that we should have the justest cause to suspect our conclusions, and to ask ourselves whether we could be right in defying the opinions of mankind, and in making ourselves, by opinion and by practice, the objects of aversion to those whose good opinion was worth securing. And we might also bring ourselves to the belief, that the doctrine of human responsibility was totally erroneous, and that all punishment was totally unjust. Here we should find that the machine of society was entirely at a stand, and that nothing but confusion and chaos dwelt upon the earth.* We must, therefore, either adopt opinions which would lead to extravagant results, or be content

* See particularly Butler's Analogy, Part I. ch. 6. paragraph 6.

to confess that there is a point beyond which human ingenuity cannot go ; that we must acknowledge our weakness, and believe it possible that there are mysteries in Nature which are perhaps only comprehensible to the Omniscient Mind.

SECTION XLIX.

ACTS xvi. 30, 31.—“ *What must I do to be saved ? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*”

A LITTLE less faith, and more works, says the sceptic, would be better for the christian world.

I cannot reply more satisfactorily to this sarcasm than by extracting the remarks of a talented friend, now no more :*—

“ To believe on Christ is to have faith and dependence on him, to which faith or dependence so many and mighty works are attributed in Scripture. The belief, indeed, of the circumstances,—that Christ came into the world to save sinners, that he has made a full and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the world, and that whosoever cometh to him in confidence, he will raise to life everlasting,—may appear an expedient much too simple for bringing home to the heart the provision which God has made

* Sermons, by the Rev. S. Pope, p. 97.

for the salvation of mankind. Yet, if we examine how, *in common life*, we are moved by the credit we give to certain reports, we shall very clearly comprehend how the Holy Spirit makes use of the statements of Scripture respecting the work of Christ, to sanctify the dispositions, and train up the Christian towards perfect holiness. In drawing our illustration *from every-day transactions*, we must be understood to speak only of such as really affect our welfare. There are an infinite number of circumstances, in which we have no interest whatever, and which we can hardly be said to believe or disbelieve, inasmuch as our belief or distrust has never been brought to the trial, because it in no wise interfered with our immediate comfort or inconvenience. But we lay it down as a ground for argument, which we conceive to be invincible, that *in common life* the conduct of all reasonable people is materially affected by the credit or belief which they give to the matters which really concern them. For example, when we are told that at a certain hour of a certain day we shall obtain a long-desired possession of great wealth and power, if our belief of the story is effectual, we cannot but be gratified in anticipation ; or, when we

are told that on a certain day a great and inevitable calamity will overtake us, we are overwhelmed with sorrow if the account submitted to us is effectually believed. In both cases, it is simple faith which makes a change in our feelings and conduct. But the examples may be made to approximate still nearer in resemblance to the great doctrine of faith in Christ, which we are anxious to illustrate. For instance, if every one of us in this congregation had committed crimes worthy of death, and, after being sentenced accordingly, had been informed, that to-morrow at this hour we should have to discharge in full the demands of an injured law,—if we really had faith in the information, the practical effect would be a sense of individual danger; we should fear and tremble each one for himself. But, should we be informed that some powerful individual had, at the expense of great personal sacrifice, released us from the claims of justice, and obtained for us a gracious pardon, what effect would be produced in our minds on the reception of such intelligence? As long as we disbelieved the report, we should remain in the same state as before, of trepidation and terror. But, if we had faith in our informant, we should

be transferred, at once, from a state of gloomy desperation to an existence, on which beamed all the sunshine of hope new risen. At the same time, the feelings of our mind would undergo transformation : new motives of action would arise ; and, instead of that sullen dejection which befits a criminal destined for execution, our hearts would “burn within us,” through an impatience of desire to prove our joy and gratitude to the generous being who had so nobly disregarded self, and made a way for us to escape. We do not affirm that this grateful disposition would of necessity exist in the heart of one so favoured ; we only contend that a belief of his having received a benefit is a natural mode of exciting gratitude in the heart of him on whom it is conferred, and that the gratitude cannot exist without the belief. Such is the effect of faith *in ordinary life*. A sure and certain consequence attaches to our believing or disbelieving every fact in which we are intimately interested. When the fact is favourable, we rejoice in believing it ; when unfavourable, we sorrow for the same reason. If we have so little concern with the subject that our feeling and behaviour suffer no alteration, whether the fact be true or false, we can-

not in that case be said to believe or disbelieve it.

“Perhaps, in this simple illustration, we may find a key with which to open the mystery of faith in the gospel, and to comprehend how the Spirit of God employs a belief in Christ to turn men from sin to holiness; and how He could employ no other *instrument so well adapted to the constitution of man*. The gospel is never considered in Scripture to be only a set of opinions, a collection of facts which a man may carelessly hold and call himself a believer. Every fact and doctrine is designed to have a personal application, to produce a permanent effect on the practice, just as one of the narrations or facts in common life, the truth of which deeply concerns us. The gospel is an exhibition of the character and attributes of a just, holy, and merciful God in the face of Christ, and of the connexion which man holds with him in his two characters of a sinner condemned and a sinner saved.

“When, therefore, the apostle directed the jailor to believe in Christ, he meant not to recommend to him an abstract principle, but a hearty conviction of the truth of every doctrine

connected with his atonement; to inform him, how, the gospel being a remedy provided for the healing of the nations, faith is the application of that remedy to the soul. *The comparison is familiar*, that, as a medicine, however valuable, can produce no cure unless taken; so the gospel, however salutary, is ineffectual, unless thoroughly believed."

SECTION L.

ACTS xvi. 31.—“ *And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shall be saved, and thy house.*”

HERE is partiality, it is said: Why should this man's *house* be saved more than that of others, merely because he himself believed?

But let me ask a practical question: Who ever finds fault with the partiality of this command and promise: “Train up a child in the way he should go: and, when he is old, he will not depart from it?” (Prov. xxii. 6.) And yet why should the children of one parent be better instructed and turn out better than those of another, merely because the one parent is a better man? This question is a counterpart of the other. Yet, on the question being asked in the case of an execution, Why was that man

put to death? and on the answer being given, He attributed his punishment himself to his want of moral instruction in early life, and to bad example, we might pity such a case; but that would not restore the man, nor manifest things to be other than they are. Remarks of this kind are very extensive in their application; but we may observe generally that it ought not to surprise us to find that good accrues to men from good parents, good friends, good instructors, as evil is confessed to accrue to men from the opposites of these. If, therefore, we read in Genesis (xxxix. 5) of Joseph, that "from the time that Pharaoh had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake;" this seems clearly analogous to the constitution of nature. And, if we read here the promise, that the faith of the jailor would bring with it that of his household, this also is perfectly consistent with the common course of Providence. We may suppose the Divine Being to make the following reply to the cavils of an objector to this system of things: "I do thee no wrong. Take that thine is, and go thy way. Is thine eye evil, because mine is good? Work out your own salvation; and,

whatever becomes of others, you at least will be safe.”*

This will be a fit opportunity of noticing an objection allied to that which we have been considering. It is said that the request of the apostle to his disciples that they should pray for him, (1 Thess. v. 25,) and his own custom of praying for others, (Col. i. 9,) are founded on partial principles; that it is a hard thing, that some should derive benefit from the prayer of others; while others, from not sharing, or from not so much sharing in the prayers of others, should derive little or no benefit from them. This objection will receive an answer from the preceding observations. But, indeed, there is no limit to the differences in the condition of men either in their temporal or in their spiritual capacities. Amidst all these apparent inequalities, however,—and even in the outward condition of men, there is often much less difference than appears,—the rule of justice will doubtless be preserved, and “the Lord of all the earth will do right:” greater opportunities will be found to have involved greater responsibilities; and “the child of

* See Matt. xx. 13.

many prayers" will perhaps be found in many cases further from the right hand of God than those who have been neglected or forgotten by their pious brethren.

SECTION LI.

ACTS xvii. 30.—“*The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.*” xiv. 16.—

“*Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.*”

I BEGIN to reply to the exception taken at this text, by extracting a passage from Goldsmith's *Animated Nature*: “To look for this animal,” says he, speaking of the Crocodile, “in all its natural terrors, grown to an enormous size, propagating in surprising numbers, and committing unceasing devastations, we must go to the uninhabited regions of Africa and America, to those immense rivers that roll through extensive and desolate kingdoms; where arts have never penetrated, where force alone makes distinction, and the most powerful animals exert their strength with confidence and security. Those that sail up the river Amazon or the Niger, well know how numerous and terrible those animals are in such parts of the world. They are found

there sometimes lying as close to each other as a raft of timber on one of our streams."

This is one side of the picture; but now we will look at the other: "The crocodile," the same writer adds, "that was once so terrible along the banks of the Nile, is now neither so large, nor its numbers so great as formerly. The arts of mankind have, through a course of ages, powerfully operated to its destruction: and, though it is sometimes seen, it appears comparatively timorous and feeble."

Here is in nature what we have in revelation. The Author of nature seems to have overlooked, appears as if He had not seen (which is the meaning of the word, that our translators have interpreted *winked at*,) at one time what He cares for, and suffers or causes to be corrected, at another. At one time is the world overrun by a noxious animal, and devastated by its incessant inroads, whereas at another its power and numbers almost disappear. This is one example only of so extensive a change; but animated nature supplies the inquirer with numerous examples of the same kind.

But, passing by these, we proceed to human life, to refer to its extensive changes and dissimilarities at different periods. Now compare together

the state of barbarism, and that of civilization ; and what greater diversity can well be imagined ? Consider the horrors of extermination caused by such ruffian nations as the Goths, the Vandals, the Huns, and the Tartars ; by such merciless warriors as Alaric, Genserich, Alexander, and Timon ; and then compare with these the humane and fostering labours of such benefactors to mankind as Solon, Antoninus, Peter the Great, and Charlemagne ; and, in more private life, as Howard, Wilberforce, Penn, and Jenner. Consider the times when there were no schools and no learning, no knowledge of medicine, and no attention paid to the sick in dispensaries and hospitals. The wonders of steam are of late, and of printing are of modern, discovery ; and the use of even such simple and now necessary food as tea and potatoes, is but recent in Europe. Even the very knowledge of America by Europeans is only as old as Columbus ; and since his time the very large and important continent of New Holland has been developed to the rest of the nations. Such and so many are the instances, in which it has pleased the Author of nature to overlook as it were mankind ; and, after centuries and thousands of years, He has waked “ like a giant refreshed with wine,” and

has thrown open the doors of knowledge, of peace, of health, and of comfort, to an admiring and a wondering world ; when

“ The desert smil’d,
And Paradise was opened in the wild.”

These analogies of Nature are of wonderful importance in removing the difficulty of the Scripture before us. They evince together a uniformity, which shows one fountain and one original : they point to one will and to one power. For let us not suppose that the difficulty of the subject is confined to the Scripture ; the student of natural theology may well be perplexed in unravelling the mystery, why the world or great parts of it have been and are kept so long in ignorance of arts and sciences, in wretchedness and desolation ; why

“ Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathom’d caves of ocean bear ;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness in the desert air.”

But, where nature precedes, revelation can have no objection to follow ; and if we cannot obtain satisfactory reasons for the divine operations in the former, we are unreasonable

to expect to find them for the same operations in the latter.

All that is necessary is to observe that Scripture announces to us that men as accountable creatures shall be fairly dealt by ; that they* that have no law, are a law unto themselves ; and “that that servant, who knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself. neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes ; but he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few.”

* Rom. ii. 14.

† Luke xii. 47, 48.

SECTION LII.

ROM. i. 20 to ver. 32.—“ So that they are without excuse, *because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful,*” &c.

THIS, and all that follows in this passage, is said of the Gentiles : and it is thought *that they were excusable*, since they had little else to guide them but the idolatrous abominations of their own countries, which led them rather to reject than seek the true God and the duties of morality.

But let us take, not abstract notions, but, what is of much more force, the opinions and feelings of the Heathens themselves. What are all the appeals made by the pagan satirists and ethical philosophers to the natural conscience and to the responsibilities of men ? Did they think, that, because the opportunities given to their countrymen to lead a righteous life were but few and scanty, therefore they were freed from all the remorse which arises from

known guilt, and from all fear of future consequences? Why should they have lashed vice, if it deserved no censure? Why should they have made such earnest exhortations to morality, if men were justified in living as they listed?

These questions cannot be answered but in a manner which is in perfect unison with, and in direct confirmation of, the apostle's remarks. And here I cannot do better than cite the words of Mr. Madan in his preface to Juvenal: "The religious reader will observe," says he, "that God, who 'in times past suffered all the (nations) heathen to walk in their own ways, nevertheless left not Himself without witness,'* not only by the outward manifestation of His power and goodness in the works of creation and providence, but by men also, who, in their several generations, have so far shown 'the work of the law written in their hearts,' as to bear testimony against the unrighteousness of the world in which they lived. Hence we find the apostle of the Gentiles quoting† a passage from his countryman, Aratus of Cilicia, against idolatry, or imagining there are gods made with hands. We find the same apostle reproving

* Acts xiv. 16.

† Acts xvii. 28.

the vices of lying and gluttony in the Cretans, by a quotation from the Cretan poet Epimenides,* whom he calls a prophet of their own."

Were I to cite all the soul-stirring outbursts of indignant feeling recorded in heathen history against the iniquities of abandoned men, I might fill volumes : but I must select one as eminently manifesting the natural sense of mankind, and its condemnation of crime, at a period when Revelation did not direct its opinion. It is the description by Livy of what followed the violation of Lucretia by Tarquin and her subsequent self-destruction : " While† the husband and father were overpowered by grief, Brutus, drawing the knife from the wound of Lucretia, and holding it out, reeking with blood, before him, said, ' By this blood, most chaste until injured by royal insolence, I swear and call you, O ye Gods, to witness, that I will prosecute to destruction, by sword, fire, and every forcible means in my power, both Lucius Tarquinius the Proud, and his impious wife, together with their entire race ; and never will suffer one of them, nor any other person whatever, to be king in Rome.' He then delivered the

* Tit. 1. 12.

† Livy, i. 59. Baker.

knife to Collatinus, and afterwards to Lucretius and Valerius. They took the oath as directed ; and, converting their grief into rage, followed Brutus, who put himself at their head, and called on them to proceed instantly to abolish kingly power. They brought out the body of Lucretia from the house, conveyed it to the forum, and assembled the people, who came together quickly, in astonishment, as may be supposed, at a deed so atrocious and unheard of. Every one exclaimed with vehemence against the villany and violence of the prince : they were deeply affected by the grief of her father, and also at the discourse of Brutus, who rebuked their tears and ineffectual complaints, and advised them, as became men, to become Romans, to take up arms against those who had dared to treat them as enemies. The most spirited among the youth offered themselves with their arms, and the rest followed their example. On which, leaving half their number at the gates to defend Collatia, and fixing guards to prevent any intelligence of the commotion being carried to the princes, the rest, with Brutus at their head, marched to Rome. When they arrived there, the sight of such an armed multitude spread terror and confusion

wherever they came : but, in a little time, when people observed the principal men of the state marching at their head, they concluded that whatever the matter was, there must be good reason for it. Nor did the heinousness of the affair raise less violent emotions in the minds of the people at Rome, than it had at Collatia : so that, from all parts of the city, they hurried into the forum, where, as soon as the party arrived, Brutus made a speech, recounting the violence and passion of Sextus Tarquinius, the shocking violation of Lucretia's chastity, and her lamentable death By descanting on these and other topics, he inflamed the rage of the multitude, so that they were easily persuaded to deprive the king of his government, and to pass an order for the banishment of Lucius Tarquinius, his wife and children Tullia fled from her house ; both men and women, wherever she passed, imprecating curses on her head."

Nor can I omit a passing reference to that eloquent vehemence of interrogative, with which Cicero addresses the sanguinary Catiline : " How far, Catiline, wilt thou abuse our patience ? how long shall thy frantic rage baffle the efforts of justice ? to what height meanest thou to

carry thy daring insolence? Art thou nothing daunted by the union of all the wise and worthy citizens, nothing by the looks and countenances of all here present?"*

But we must also observe that the irresistible working of conscience in the self-condemnation of the unrighteous is to be traced everywhere among the heathen writers, as where Cicero exposes the terrors of the guilty Piso: "How you fled! how you trembled on that day! how the consciousness of your crimes made you despair of life!"† But this is seen no where more forcibly than among the heathen poets. And even in their recitals of fabulous narrations, this power of conscience is perpetually displaying itself. Every one will remember the contest between right and wrong described by Ovid as going on in the mind of Medea:

"But love, resistless love, my soul invades;
Discretion this, affection that persuades:
I see the right, and I approve it too,
Condemn the wrong, and yet the wrong pursue."‡

Nor do the self-reproaches of Europa, as painted by Horace, deserve less regard:

* Cic. Orat. in Cat. i. Duncan.

† Cic. in Pison. 35.

‡ Ov. Met. 7. 19. Dryden.

“ Where am I, wretched and undone?
 And shall a single death atone
 A virgin’s crime ?”*

But that there is a natural law among men, independent of revelation, is attested in the most decisive terms by the pagan writers of antiquity. “ These points,” says Demosthenes,† “ are manifest ; they need not the decision of laws ; they are determined by nature.” So Sophocles speaks of

“ Th’ unwritten law divine,
 Immutable, eternal, not like these
 Of yesterday, but made ere time began.”‡

But the most remarkable passage is that of Cicero,§ where he is speaking of a particular law of human nature : “ For this, my lords, is not a written but an innate law ; we have not been taught it by the learned, we have not received it from our ancestors, we have not taken it from books ; but it is derived from, it is

* Hor. Od. iii. 27. Francis.

† Dem. on the Crown, 83. Leland.

‡ Soph. Antig. 454. Francklin.

§ Cic. pro Mil. 3.

forced on us by, nature, and stamped in indelible characters upon our very frame: it was not conveyed to us by instruction, but wrought into our constitution; it is the dictate, not of education, but of instinct.”

What need can there be for any further vindication of the apostle's assertions, which, as we see, are as powerfully declared by the voice of Nature as by the *words of Scripture*?

SECTION LIII.

ROM. v. 19.—“ *As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*”

1 PET. iii. 18.—“ *Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust.*”

1 TIM. ii. 5.—“ *There is one mediator between God and man.*”

THE statements now before us have been made the subject of much cavil. That the righteousness of one person should be made available to cancel the unrighteousness of others, is thought a strange doctrine. And yet, if we will look but for a short while into the construction of society, we shall see innumerable instances of this kind of arrangement. The ruin of an individual, who has disgraced himself by a course of the most profuse extravagance, shall be averted by the kind interposition of a friend, whose moral principles and conduct have

enabled him not only to maintain a respectable station in the world, but to give the helping hand to the miserable. Hence the wretched bankrupt is restored to the means of working out an independence; and the debtor, who was pining within the walls of a jail, is released by the sympathy of virtuous beneficence. Hence one man shall stand in the room of another, be his representative and his surety, and thus hold over him the shield of his vicarious protection. Hence the debts or offences of one man shall be as if they had never been: they shall become in effect obliterated, or forgotten.*

I might have spoken also of the redemption of slaves and captives by the property of their friends, and their restoration to liberty by means of hostages acting as their representatives; but I wish to confine myself to cases of distress brought on by the voluntary misconduct of those who suffer by it. If Christ, then, has stood in our place with our offended God, and if he has borne our sins, is there

* Thus among the Romans one word to express "to pardon," literally meant "not to know" anything of that which was pardoned.

anything in this alien from the common course of nature ?

“ Though nothing,” says a profound divine,* “ that another person does, can make us more personally valuable ; yet the common course of things every day proves, that, what another person does, may avert misery from us, or procure happiness for us. If there is anything wrong in such a procedure, then the whole course of nature is manifestly so : it being necessary, in the ordinary course of nature, which is no less God’s appointment than His supernatural dispensations, that one man should be rescued from ruin or advanced to happiness by the interposition of another. And the arguments, which are brought against the grace of Christ, conclude with equal strength, that is with no strength at all, against the charity of our fellow-creatures.”

We know that the good and the virtuous often suffer for the crimes of the vicious. We have had many illustrations of this fact in the preceding pages, and we need not repeat or add to them here. Can it seem strange, then, if this course of Providence is reversed, and if the wicked be in their turn benefited by the virtues

* Discourses of the late Rev. Jeremiah Seed.

of the good? Or, to apply this, can it seem strange, if, after we have suffered through the sins of our first parents, we are restored through the sinless perfections of an almighty Deliverer?

We may proceed to speak of the prevalence of sacrifices, which show the feelings of mankind on the transference of the sins of the guilty to the poor victim which is made to stand in their place, and to bear their iniquity. We might speak even of the daily slaughter of sheep and oxen for our food, as an instance of individuals dying for the lives of other: but, although this is a good illustration of mediation in a general manner, I wish to confine the subject, as I stated before, to suffering as taking place on account of the guilt of others:—though indeed it is true that Scripture gives us ample cause for believing that the whole system of living on the lives of others was occasioned by the defection of Adam, and thus might easily be brought to bear on our argument. However, the feelings of mankind, as evinced by sacrifices, give an absolute sanction to the grand scripture doctrine of the one great sacrifice offered for sin by “the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world.”

And all these things, when taken together,

afford us the strongest grounds of assurance, that what at first sight seemed to be nothing but the dream of folly contains in it a weight of evidence, and a solidity of foundation, which nothing can overthrow ; and that what seemed altogether opposed to “ the wisdom of the wise, and the understanding of the prudent,” is in truth agreeable to the most consummate wisdom and the most perfect understanding.

The reader will see the subject of atonement treated in the profoundest manner by Bishop Butler, in Part ii. Chapter 5, of his *Analogy of Religion* ; but I was unwilling to give a mere abstract reference to that work. The plan of salvation as laid down in Scripture is so intimately connected with it, and the ridicule of objectors has been so keenly directed against it, that it did not appear proper to dismiss it so easily from our notice.

SECTION LIV.

1 COR. vi. 9.—“ *Neither shall fornicators inherit the kingdom of God.*”

THE vice here mentioned is defended as a natural indulgence, and as therefore undeserving of the wrath of the God of nature.

But there are surely other propensities, to which our nature inclines us, which meet notwithstanding with universal reprobation, even among those persons who advocate this. And, although some are very willing to excuse this in the case of young men, what do these same persons say, when they find it indulged by the other sex ? And what would be their feelings, if they were to find that their sisters no more checked these *very* natural inclinations than their brothers or their sons ? and yet it is undoubted that nature has not formed the other sex less susceptible of passion.

But in truth, nature, not less than Revelation, has manifestly decided against the indulgence in question. I need scarcely allude to

the loathsome diseases, the painful maladies, the early and horrible deaths, which are often the result of it. So that, if this propensity is natural, the punishment of it is not less so.

These are the more palpable demonstrations of nature against these practices. But, if we would enter into the many irregularities produced by them, and into the loss of character and fortune which they bring with them, the voice of nature would be heard still more distinctly against them. Even in the Pagan times, when man was not restrained by a divine Revelation, we find, in the works of Terence, Horace, and other writers, sufficient indications of the disquietudes and miseries which followed in the train of these indulgences.

SECTION LV.

1 TIM. ii. 5.—“ *There is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.*”

REV. i. 5.—“ *Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory and dominion for ever and ever.*”

THE mediation of Christ has been much objected to ; but the whole world proceeds on the mediation or instrumentality of others. This is indeed a truth which scarcely needs illustration. It has been, however, well stated by Bishop Butler in his Analogy, (Part ii. ch. 5,) and the reader will there find on the subject ample satisfaction, should he require any.

But the real difficulty was how to pay honour and homage to this great Mediator, without entrenching on the worship of the One God. This difficulty, however, has been resolved with great ability by Doctor Watts, who has based his reasoning on the analogy of Nature,

and has placed the subject in so interesting a view, that it will require no apology to introduce his argument here.*

“ There is something in the reason and nature of man, that inclines him to own and worship some God or some superior being, from whom himself and all his enjoyments are derived, and on whom his expectations depend.

“ Reason and Revelation conspire to teach us that there is but one God.

“ This one God has required expressly in His word, that He alone should be the object of our worship or religious homage.

“ There is something in the nature of man, which inclines him to reverence the image of that being which he worships. And the reason is evident : because the image is supposed to be something more within the reach of his senses, and therefore more suited to his bodily nature, than God who is the unseen object of his worship ; or, at least, because he can have the image sensibly present with him, when he has not the original ; and, the image being supposed to have the likeness of the original object of worship, it refreshes the memory, and brings to mind the excellences of the divine original.

* Watts' Works, 4to. vol. vi. p. 581.

“ If we love and honour a friend, a father, or a king, we desire to have their pictures or images near us ; we pay a sort of love and veneration to them on account of their likeness to the original persons ; and we also pay our love and veneration to the absent original by the means or medium of these pictures.

“ It is from this principle that the heathens in all nations, who have worshipped the sun, moon, and stars, or their kings, heroes, and ancestors, have generally made pictures and images of them, and either revered and worshipped the images, or the originals in and by those images, or both. And for this reason, in the antichristian church, they did not only *worship the beast, but they made an image thereof, and worshipped it.* (Rev. xiii. 14.)

“ God has expressly forbidden men to make any image of Himself, and worship it, or even to make it a medium of paying their religious homage and worship to Himself. And one great reason of the prohibition is, because man kind is so prone to worship images which they have made themselves.

“ God has never given us any express image of Himself, but his Son, Jesus Christ ; who is (Heb. i. 2) the brightness of his Father’s glory,

and the express image of his person. He is (2 Cor. iv. 4) the image of God, of the invisible God, (Col. i. 15). Now this expression seems to have a proper reference to his human nature, or must at least include his human nature in it; because everything that relates directly to the divine nature of Christ is as invisible as God the Father; and therefore his divine nature, considered alone, would never have been so particularly described as the image of the invisible God.

“God himself has required us to make this His image the medium of our worship paid to Him. *Through him we have access to the Father*, Eph. ii. 18. *Give thanks to the Father by him*, Col. iii. 17. And He requires men and angels to worship this His image. John v. 23; Heb. i. 6. Thus far has God indulged or encouraged that natural inclination in man to reverence the image of that divine Being which he worships.

“To this end it has pleased Him in a special manner to assume into the nearest union with Himself this His Son, and thereby to render him a more complete image of Himself. Thus the Son is *one with the Father* (John x. 30) by this union, as he expresses it: *He that*

hath seen me, hath seen the Father ; and I am in the Father, and the Father in me. And this is done to render him capable of divine honours ; that he might be worshipped, and yet that that which is not God, might not be made the object of our worship.

“ When the heathens worshipped the images of their gods, the best way they could take to vindicate it was under this notion, that they supposed their gods to inhabit their own images. But with infinitely more truth and justice may Christians worship the Son of God, who is the only appointed image of God, subsisting in a personal union with the indwelling Godhead.

“ This may be illustrated by a lively similitude. A vast hollow globe of crystal, as large as the sun, is in itself a fair image of the sun. But, if we suppose the sun itself included in this crystal globe, it would become a much brighter image of the sun, and it would be in some sense one with the sun itself. And thus the same ascriptions which are given to the sun because of his light and heat, may be given also to this crystal globe, considered as inhabited by the sun itself, which could not be done without this inhabitation.

“ Then, whatever honours were paid to this

globe of crystal would redound to the honour of the sun : even as the divine honour and adoration which is paid to our Saviour arises from the personal union of the human nature with the divine, and finally redounds to the glory of God. (Phil. ii. 11.)”

SECTION LVI.

COLOSS. iii. 1.—“ *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.*”

EXCEPTION has been taken at these expressions, on the ground that heaven must be some fixed place, not above and below and on all sides of us, as must be the case if in all quarters of the globe men are to consider heaven as *above* them.

But, without entering into the question of the locality of heaven, we may observe that Nature, no less than Scripture, teaches us to be directed in our notions by the *appearances* of things. We may speak ever so learnedly on the motion of the earth round the sun, and yet we shall not alter the common mode of speaking,—common even to philosophers who know

the truth,—of the rising and of the setting of the sun. This may be called a fiction in nature: be it so. We do not object. But then we need not object to hear the above representations called fictions in Scripture, being perfectly content, if Scripture can point to Nature as its guide, and shield itself under her authority. All that it was necessary for either Nature or Scripture to guard against, was to prevent our being led into *practical* mistakes: and no one can pretend that we are led into these by such a passage as that under our consideration. The devout man, therefore, may direct the eye of faith to that part of the heavens which lies before him, wherever he may be, without an impeachment of his good sense.

Besides, it seems certain, that not only Jews and Christians, but Pagans, have considered heaven as situated above them: so clearly do the words of Scripture harmonize with the natural tendencies of mankind.

“If you raise your hand to heaven,” says Horace,* “your vine shall not be affected by the pestilential wind.” And Homer:† “The people prayed to the gods, and lifted up their

* Od. iii. 23.

† Il. vii. 177.

hands." This indeed was so common a practice, that the learned Matthiæ* explains the government of the dative in Greek by verbs of *praying*, on the principle that, "in praying, the countenance or the hands were *lifted up*."

I have noticed of the common mode of speaking of the motion of the sun. And it is not without reason that Scripture has not departed from it: for its object was to teach, not science, but religion; to correct the heart and life, not to inform the mind. Hence it is no objection to Revelation that the sun and moon were addressed by Joshua in words which do not suit our improved knowledge of the heavenly bodies: "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon."†

* Greek Gramm., § 393.

† Josh. x. 12.

SECTION LVI.

JAMES ii. 10.—“ *He that offendeth in one point, is guilty of all.*”

THIS declaration has been objected to ; but the apostle’s own illustration of it furnishes a satisfactory solution : “ For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now, if thou commit no adultery, yet, if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.”

The daily process of law concurs with this reasoning. The murderer is punished, although he be no thief; and the thief is punished, although he be no murderer. The law does not say, Whoever steals AND murders shall be punished; but whoever steals OR murders shall be punished. A man offending in either way, or in any way, violates the law, which does not wait to take cognizance of the offence until the offender has violated all its decrees ; but it feels its majesty assailed by a single offence, and vindicates itself by punishing it; while the offender becomes ranked under the *general*

name of a criminal or a malefactor. We read that Eteocles of old was desirous to except one act of injustice from punishment :

“ ——— If e'er we break the ties of right,
'Tis when a kingdom is the glorious prize ;
In other things be strictly just.”*

But he found to his cost that the law of justice admitted of no such exception. To put the matter, however, in a more direct way : the law can go no further than death : but a man need not break all the laws of his country to bring himself under this penalty, yet, if he dies, he is in no better condition than if he had broken them all. Again : rebellion against the state does not consist in attacking it in every possible way ; but one overt act convicts a man, and renders him liable to death, thereby putting him in no better state than if he had resisted it in a hundred. It was in the same spirit that the Athenian axiom was conceived, that an offence done to one citizen was considered as an offence done to all : as well as the Latin maxim,† that the person who does an injury to one citizen threatens the whole community. Indeed the analogy pervades everything in nature. Deface one part of a building, you

* Cic. Off. iii. 21. Cockman.

† See Theseon Thesaurus, p. 46.

spoil the look of the whole ; tear one leaf of a book, you render the whole valueless ; make one rent in a garment, and you ruin it all. Cicero, indeed, raises the question,* “ Are you aware, that, should you lose one of your Corinthian dishes, you may yet have the rest of your furniture complete ; but that, if you lose one virtue, or, to speak more correctly, if you confess there is one you have not, you have no virtue at all ? ” Yet, while he confirms in a remarkable manner the truth of the apostolic assertion, we may correctly reason on the other part of the sentence, that, although the rest of the furniture be indeed complete when one dish is broken, still there is no one who would not feel a loss of the one piece as in fact spoiling the whole set.

“ Conquer your passion,” said Scipio to Masinissa,† “ and do not mar by one vice your many good qualities.” Every man in truth has his besetting sin, and deserves no praise for not yielding to those to which he is not inclined. “ As you will not find every tree or production in the same field,” says Cicero,‡ “ so it is not every vice that grows in the same life.”

* Cic. Tusc. Q. ii. 14.

† Liv. 30. 14.

‡ Cic. pro Rosc. 37.

SECTION LVII.

1 PET. v. 8.—“ *The devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour.*”

Is it not a great impeachment of God's mercy and wisdom to suppose that He allows thus an evil spirit to roam about, for the purpose of seducing and ruining mankind?

I will say in return, Where is the *practical* difference between a personal agent suffered thus to tempt us, and our own lusts and passions, or external temptations? Surely the *real* difficulty is not whether the tempter be a person or not, but that there should be such a thing as temptation.

Now, no one will deny, I suppose, that there is such a thing as allurements to vice. If there should be such an arguer, I presume he will stand alone in his denial. At least, he has

against him all history and all experience. "Divinely," says Cicero,* "does Plato call pleasure the bait of evils: for that men are caught by it, as fishes are by a hook." "Rapes and adulteries,"† says the same writer, "and all other iniquity, are excited by no other allurements but those of pleasure." Ovid calls riches the incentives to evils: and similar expressions abound in the pagan writers, and in all others. Well, then, how is it that the Almighty has allowed these provocations to evil, which fill the world's history with blood, misery, and death, corrupt its purity, and debase its dignity? This difficult inquiry resolves itself at last into the great problem of the origin of evil: and this problem is not rendered in any way more difficult because the Scriptures give a personality to the tempter. It is only bringing the evils of temptation more clearly and boldly before us, and indeed is really dealing mercifully with us, by putting us more expressly and palpably on our guard against them. In short, Revelation is not to blame because there is temptation: if anywhere, the

* De Senect. 13. So in his Hortensius, "Illecebræ atque escæ malorum."

† De Sen. 12.

blame rests with Nature ; although Revelation will never object to expose herself to the attacks of her adversaries, if she is sustained and supported by Nature.

SECTION LVIII.

2 PET. .iii. 16.—“ *As also in his (Paul's) epistles: in which are some things hard to be understood; which they, that are unlearned and unstable, wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction.*”

WHAT is the great good, it is asked, of these Scriptures, if they may thus be made the occasion of evil to mankind?

L'Estrange, in his After-thought, has some excellent remarks appertaining to this subject. He is replying to objectors against the system of paraphrases: “ A paraphrase, 'tis true, may be loose, arbitrary, and extravagant. And so may anything that ever was committed to writing. Nay, the best and most necessary of duties, faculties, and things, may degenerate by the abuse of them into acts of sin, shame, and folly. Men may blaspheme in their prayers: they may poison one another in their cups or in their porridge. They may talk

treason ; and, in short, they may do a million of extravagant things in all cases and offices that any man can imagine under the sun. And what is the objector's inference now, from the possibility of this abuse, but that we are neither to pray, nor to eat, nor to drink, nor to open our mouths, nor, in fine, to do anything else, for fear of mere possibilities as dangerous as the other ?”

There are serious objections made to the art of printing, because it has deluged the world with irreligious and immoral publications : to the use of wine, because it has been shamefully abused to the purpose of licentiousness : to the advantages of monarchy, because it has been disgraced by the vilest tyrants. Everything has been abused ; but surely he must be bereft of reason, who will seriously wish us to abandon everything which is abused. St. Paul, with that admirable good sense which always distinguishes his remarks, has made the true distinction in this matter : “Using this world, as not abusing it ;”^{*} but, to use again his own words, we “must needs go out of the world,”[†] if we expect to find anything exempt from abuse.

^{*} 1 Cor. vii. 31.

[†] 1 Cor. v. 10.

“This work,” says Cicero* to his son respecting his own Book of Offices, “is the present, dear Marcus, that your father sends you, and in my opinion it is a very good one ; but that will depend on the use you will make of it.” And Chremes says well in Terence† of his son’s friend : “Unhappy ! How little reason has he to think so ? What is there that the world calls good, which he may not enjoy ? Parents, his country flourishing in the blessings of peace, friends, birth, relations, riches. But these indeed are all to be estimated by the temper of mind of him who possesses them. To him, who knows the right use of them, they are good ; but to a man that does not make a right use of them, they are plagues.” To too many indeed it happens, in the words of the Psalmist, that “the things, which should have been for their wealth, are an occasion of falling ;” but the world has never yet come, and certainly never will, to that state of frenzy as to refuse food, because there are many gluttons and drunkards ; or to reject any of the gifts of God, because there many who turn them into channels of sin and perdition.

* Cic. Off. ad fin. Cockm.

† Ter. Heaut. 1, 2. 17. Patrick.

In considering the objection stated in Section XIII, I observed, that the Roman Catholic urges that same objection against the Protestant. And here is a second instance of this mode of acting. But we contend, as Protestants, that there is no more reason for denying or scantily giving the Bible to the people, for fear they should abuse it, than there is for doubting the divine origin of the Scriptures, because they have been made the instruments of abuse and ruin.

SECTION LIX.

1 JOHN v. 7.—“ *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost ; and these three are one.*”

THIS is the celebrated passage, the authenticity of which is so much disputed in the Christian world. Now the point here is this. Many persons have urged all such passages, whether containing more or less important various readings, as militating against the idea that Providence has had anything to do with the Scriptures.

But really the only subject of inquiry here will be found to be, whether it can be proved that the Scripture doctrines are affected by this variety of reading. And it lies on the objector to prove this, or he does nothing. Divines say that such passages as these do not affect the doctrine, because what is legitimately deducible from them may be deduced from other passages of Scripture. Thus, Dr. Adam Clarke, who with the greatest honesty abandons the genuineness of this passage, observes that

the great doctrine which it teaches is abundantly declared elsewhere.

The fact is, we are too apt to suppose that God must alter altogether His general plan of operation, when He employs miraculous agency. But even in miracles, there is no need to multiply them beyond what is reasonable and necessary; for God cannot be supposed ever to act in an unreasonable and unnecessary manner. We must think that even in His miraculous operations He will act in harmony with His general laws, unless there is an overwhelming necessity that he should act otherwise. And thus we observed on Acts xxvii. 31, that though God had determined to save Paul and his fellow-passengers from death by shipwreck, He yet had determined that this purpose should be effected in a manner analogous to His general operations: "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved."

And now what is the general course of the world in regard to books which have been handed down to us from antiquity? Is it not exactly that, in which the Scriptures have been handed down to us? We believe in the genuineness of the writings of Thucydides and Xenophon, of Cæsar and Tacitus, although

there are notoriously many various readings, and occasionally many passages, the genuineness of which admits of much dispute. We do not discard such writers, because the manuscripts, which have brought them down to our times, do not agree together in one perfect harmonious identity: nor on this account do we feel any doubts of the general history or circumstances contained in their writings. Why then should we not act in the same manner in regard to the Scriptures? For my own part, I ever love to trace analogy in the book of Scripture and in the book of Nature; and I feel certain that this pursuit must lead to the attainment of solid truth and satisfaction.

Persons may indeed carry out their thoughts too freely here, nor can I express much agreement with the remark of Mr. Jenyns, that a diamond is not less a diamond, because it is incrustated with mud. We should in this way be strangely left at frequent difficulty in distinguishing the base from the pure: nor indeed could we always do it, and Revelation would certainly suffer both in its credibility and in its utility. But lay down the position that we have, in the concurrent testimony of the MSS., what is sufficient for faith and practice, and

then I have no need to separate the chaff from the wheat, but have one sure solid foundation for my religion.

If indeed we compare the text of Scripture minutely with the text of profane writers, we shall find more satisfaction than we at first sight suspect. I shall conclude this Section by extracting some remarks, which prove this assertion, from the writings of the laborious Stackhouse :*

“ Considering that, before the use of printing, more MSS. were made of the Bible than of any heathen author whatever, and that these MSS. have been examined with more care, and collated with more exactness, and the various readings set down even to the most minute differences, we are not to wonder if, with all this scrupulous search, the variations are so many. The editors of profane authors do not use to trouble their readers with a useless list of every little slip. What is thought commendable in an edition of the Scriptures, and has the name of fidelity, would be deemed trifling and impertinent in them.

“ We ought to esteem it a particular instance of God’s providence, that the different readings

* Appar. 1, p. xxxiv.

are fewer, and make much less alteration in the sense, than those of any book of the same bigness, and of any note or antiquity, if all the copies should be as carefully examined, and every little variation as punctually set down, as those of the Scriptures have been. And much more are we to bless the Divine Providence that, whatever differences are to be found in the several copies of the Bible, they do not in the least prejudice the fundamental points of religion, nor weaken the authority of the sacred records."

Dr. White thus concludes his Preface to the "Synopsis of Griesbach's various Readings of the Greek Testament," printed at Oxford, 1811: "Hence you will easily be able to perceive how pure and entire is the text of the New Testament, as it now stands, in everything which relates to faith and practice: and how trifling are the changes in every other department which it either can or ought to receive."

I will add, that it has pleased Providence to pursue the same method in respect to the *canon* of Scripture, leaving it to be determined on the same general principles by which the genuine writings of other ancient authors are distinguished from such as are spurious.

SECTION LX.

REV. v. 9.—“ *Thou hast redeemed us to God
by thy blood.*”

It is urged that it would have been a plan more worthy of God to have prevented sin from the first, rather than to have allowed it to enter the world, and then to accept the sacrifice of a Redeemer to make atonement for it.

But such reasonings display very little knowledge or thought of what is going on in the world around us; or, rather, such objections are founded on a complete ignorance of the visible creation, or on a total disregard of it.

For the whole system of Nature proceeds in the very manner in which the Scriptures have represented the Divine Being to have acted in the redemption of mankind by Jesus Christ. That system is one of poison and antidote; of disease and remedy; of injury and redress; of suffering and alleviation; of pain and relief. What are our asylums and hospitals, our courts of law, our surgeries, our penitentiaries, our

prisons, but proofs of this? What are the subscriptions of the benevolent on the occasion of hurricanes, fires, shipwrecks, and accidents, but proofs of the same thing? On the field of battle shall attend the surgeon to heal the wounds made by the enemy; on the loss of friends shall attend the compassionate to bind up the broken-hearted; on the unfortunate speculatist shall attend the charitable to repair his ruined fortunes. And as Scripture represents us as redeemed by Christ, so is the captive prisoner, or the stolen African, released, ransomed, redeemed by the silver of the humane.

And here I must mention an illustration of our subject, which forcibly struck me in walking by the Serpentine in London. The sight of the receiving-house of the Humane Society, and of the strong posts which are placed along the bank of the river, to enable ropes to be hauled for affording relief to sufferers from the parting ice, seemed to me to manifest a strong identity in the plan pursued by Nature and by Revelation, in allowing misery in the first place, and subsequently the means of restoration.

Then, in our fields and gardens we have noxious weeds growing around, and methods invented for eradicating them. In them we

have the destructive caterpillar, the venomous viper, the thievish fox ; and in our houses other animals of disgust and annoyance ; but ingenuity supplies us in various ways with the means of remedy and redress.

In short, Nature, in all her works, bears a testimony in behalf of the Scripture doctrine of a Redeemer, who “ has risen with healing in his wings” for the spiritual maladies of a world suffering from the infection of sin.

THE END.

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